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TWO TRUE CALIFORNIA STORIES.

AUGUSTA DANE;

OR,

THE INFLUENCE OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

MARY MORTON;

OR,

THE RESULT OF A FASHIONABLE EDUCATION.

BY J. VINSON WEBSTER.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following sketches were hastily written and published in chapters in the *California Patron* during the years 1881 and 1882. While manifestly defective in composition and general make-up, nevertheless they were read with so much interest that a demand has been made for their re-publication. As an earnest of this desire, the sale of several hundred copies have been guaranteed by friends who formerly read the stories. With these assurances of appreciation, we have been encouraged to present the work in its present form.

The stories are founded on facts, and that of "Augusta Dane" is so nearly true in every important particular, that, for obvious reasons, the real names of the leading actors have to be suppressed. The chief purpose of their composition was to discuss some phases of character and conditions of human nature not well understood, thereby endeavoring to engender a greater degree of sympathy and charity for the faults and foibles so common to our race. Although twenty-odd years have elapsed since the incidents narrated actually occurred, three or four of the principal characters still reside in California, as living witnesses of facts herein related.

If this little work proves worthy of the first blush of promise recognized in its serial form, and aids to a better understanding of ourselves and of the governing influences which control and direct our poor little lives, we shall be content.

J. V. W.

AUGUSTA DANE;

OR,

THE INFLUENCE OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

CHAPTER I.

OUR poor little lives are warped and bent
In so many strange and grotesque shapes,
By circumstance, and forces hinging
On conditions, and events passed,
That most grievous faults and mistakes
Should have wound around them
The silken cloak of Charity.

MORE than a score of years have passed since there lived in the shadows of a sequestered woodland skirting the bay of San Francisco a respected family, a father, whom we will call Judge Dane, his good wife and three children—two girls and a boy—Augusta, Annie and Alexander. Our story commences at the date when Augusta, the eldest of the three children, was just turning her sixteenth year. Her form and face were so finely moulded that he who beheld her for the first time would gaze, and turn and gaze again with renewed admiration.

She was tall for her age, fairly rounded in form, dark hair, fair complexion, with a tinge of olive in it. When looking into her dark lustrous eyes one felt as if gazing heavenward, he beheld the measureless depths of unknown worlds. No Grecian chisel ever formed more perfect features, and her expression was that of one conscious of mental strength, yet ever ready to concede and serve.

Augusta's parents were from New England—well educated and much esteemed by all who knew them.

The father was tall, cold, calculating and unyielding in his disposition, while the mother possessed much of Augusta's make up, but more practical and utilitarian withal.

Vernon Vinton, a lithe, nervous, sandy-complexioned young man of twenty-five years, a farmer's son, living some miles from the village in which the Danes resided, was paying his addresses to Augusta. Mr. and Mrs. Dane were disposed to favor young Vinton's suit, because his father was rich, and he, through the influence of a college education, was exquisitely refined. Augusta treated his advances with levity and indifference, even sneering at what she was pleased to call his "French airs." Time flew on and the affair grew serious. Encouraged by her parents, Mr. Vinton pressed his suit. He sought and formally received their consent to his union with Augusta, but *her* consent was withheld. This indisposition to unite her fortunes with those of a man for whom she had no sincere attachment was construed by Judge Dane, into an act of filial disobedience. After an embarrassing evening spent in the parlor alone with Mr. Vinton, Mrs. Dane led Augusta into the library where her father sat absorbed in his books and legal documents. Having quietly stood before him for some moments waiting recognition, he looked up from his writing, and, raising his spectacles, said in his calm, deliberate way, "What is it?

"Well," said Mrs. Dane, with an effort, "I think Mr. Vinton has gone off in a huff to-night, or at least, it seemed so to me Most likely, Augusta can explain the cause."

"What have you done or said, my daughter, at which Mr. Vinton should take offense." demanded her father, in the same tone that he was accustomed to speak to witnesses on the stand in a criminal prosecution?

"I have neither done nor said anything at which I think he has any reason to take offense. I simply told him that I could not, consistent with my better judgment, give him my hand and heart in marriage."

"*Your* better judgment!" replied her father, with emphasis on the first word. "What right have *you* to exercise judgment in the matter? Your mother and myself are certainly more competent to judge in all things pertaining to your welfare than you are yourself; and this refusal upon your part to comply with our known wishes, is downright rebellion against parental authority."

"Father," replied Augusta, in a voice which betrayed agitation and anguish, "I beseech you to hear me for a moment."

"Very well!" said Judge Dane, as he settled himself back in his seat, with the manner and tone of an attorney about to cross-question a witness before the bar. "Proceed."

"Well," commenced Augusta, as she caught hold of a chair to steady herself for the trying ordeal, "father, you, of course, are aware that I am as yet but a child in years, scarcely having turned sixteen, with my education half finished, and without having seriously considered the subject of love and matrimony. Mr. Vinton is educated and refined in his way, and has always treated me with the greatest attention and respect. I have the highest esteem for him as a gentleman and a friend, but am not in love with him, however much he may be with me. Therefore I cannot, consistent with my better feeling, consent to marry him—for the present at least. It may be that a closer acquaintance with Mr. Vinton will increase my respect and attachment for him, but for the present, I beg of you, father, not to press the matter." Augusta paused in her speech, nervous with confusion and embarrassment.

"Well, my daughter," replied the Judge, with something of his sterness in manner and speech disappearing, "I would not willingly force you into an alliance distasteful to your feelings; but, from experience, I can assure you that this sentiment which you are pleased to call 'love' is a trap and a snare. I am aware that all young people are affected with it, more or less; but the history of love-matches fully demonstrates that they are the least enduring. This hectic fever

usually takes possession of boys and girls by the time they reach their teens, and is like unto the gorgeous colors of the rainbow. As by enchantment we are drawn nearer and nearer, until the glorious tints disappear, and we find ourselves in a damp, cold mist. When we have passed our teens we begin to reason as well as love. At twenty-five reason has triumphed over passion, the vision is no longer obscured, and we enter the hymeneal craft with feelings akin to those which take possession of a judicious seaman bent on a long voyage. Every precaution is taken to see that the hull and rudder are staunch and sound, with large provision aboard for the possible calms, delays and storms that may be met with on the voyage. Every mast, beam and spar is made secure, while the lighter rigging of rope and chain and sail are considered of less consequence, for they can be replaced at will. Thus it is with matrimony. First love is but the summer sails used in pleasant weather. Judgment and reason lie at the foundation of all successful happiness."

As the Judge concluded, Augusta's face brightened, and her dark lustrous eyes sparkled as she replied: "I sincerely thank you, father, for this dissertation on love and matrimony. I could not have pleaded my case so well as you have done it for me. You say that when we pass our youth we leave the realm of visionary conceptions and Love's rainbow tints; and that when we reach the age of twenty-five the vision is no longer clouded with rose-colored dreams. I have just reached the middle row in my teens—the climax period of maiden folly; consequently my aversion to marrying Mr. Vinton may be simply a freak which a few years of time will overcome or subdue. Therefore, father, I pray you withhold this demand of yours until I reach the discretionary period which you have designated. Then, perhaps, I shall see with light and judgment akin to yours. My blinding, girlish fancies will have flown, and I shall be more able to comprehend the premises from which my father reasons."

Judge Dane was evidently puzzled at the turn the argument had taken, and sat for a moment mute with admiration

at the tact and talent the girl had displayed in her own defense; then in measured words he said: "Augusta, I will not press this matter any further at this time. I possibly should have made an exception in speaking of all young people in their teens as having rose-colored ideas of life and matrimony. I must admit that you are less subject to such conceptions than the average girl of your age, and, upon the whole, wonderfully proficient in that tact and talent which enable you to perform well everything you undertake. I simply ask you to consider this subject well. You are fully aware that it is my own and your mother's wish that you should favor Mr. Vinton's suit. He is a very worthy young man, well connected, and will no doubt be amply provided for by his father. Postpone this matter, if you so desire; but in whatever you do have regard for the wishes of your parents."

"Ah! parents who sell your daughters to gilded misery—who make merchandise of them, who laugh at such a thing as love—think of the temptations ye throw in their way, of the worse than prison houses to which ye doom them. Ay, pause and reflect!"

* * * * *

"A regular romp in the woods is this Augusta," exclaimed Vernon Vinton one pleasant afternoon as they reached the bay shore on the opposite side of the peninsula from her home.

"Yes, somewhat romantic, and, moreover, perilous," responded the girl as she seated herself on the trunk of a fallen tree.

"How perilous," inquired Mr. Vinton?

"Have you not observed the clusters of poison-oak through which we have been passing?"

"No, really," said he enthusiastically; "I have not seen another object but you in all our rambles."

"Then you must imagine yourself in a charmed presence?"

"I do indeed," he rejoined, "and feel like the poor knight in the Arabian tales who was compelled by an unseen power

to move forever around a frozen circle, endeavoring to discover a passage to the warmth, joy and happiness within."

"You speak in riddles, Mr. Vinton!"

"Riddles, indeed! You understand me but too well. I am like poor Tantalus perishing in the midst of living waters, Augusta." Kneeling before her, he continued: "You are the very life and soul of my existence, the spanning rainbow of all my hopes, and the Alpha and Omega of all my desires. Your contempt for my devotion rests upon the altar of my heart like a bundle of pitch-pine fagots lighted after many summers' seasoning. One ray of hope Augusta, and I am content. If you cannot give it, bid me go from you forever. The rolling surf below us will soon end my miserable existence, and at the same time relieve you of an incumbrance. Say the words, Augusta. Shall I stay and hope, or seek oblivion in the billows at our feet?"

"Come," said she, rising; "this story of yours is gaining on my sympathy if not my love. Let us see how sincere and earnest in this matter you are. Go down into the surf and wade out until the water gets up to your neck; then if I say, 'Hope and persevere,' you shall come out and hope; but if I say 'Love's labor lost,' you must drown yourself."

Mr. Vinton looked at the girl in blank astonishment. Neither her face nor eyes betrayed anything other than a serious purpose.

"Do you mean it?" said he, with a tremor in his voice.

"Certainly," was her reply.

For a moment he hesitated, but believing that she was only joking, he moved towards the foaming surf, looking back at every step, expecting and hoping that she would recall him. He finally reached the water's edge, while Augusta stood on the bank some twenty feet away, composedly looking on. He made a movement as if to jump in, and then looked up at the statue-like figure of the girl. "Confound her!" said he to himself, "I verily believe she would stand there and see me drown without mercy. I will not make a fool of myself in order to gratify a whim of hers. If I can-

not win her without wading out in this cold water she may go unwon and unsung."

He turned and retraced his steps. "Why did you not go in?" she inquired, with a provoking smile.

"Because I don't feel like being made the laughing stock of the neighborhood in order to gratify a whim of yours."

"Then your foolish declaration about seeking oblivion in the rolling billows was all moonshine—said only for effect."

"Well," replied he, "I didn't think you would be so cruel as to put me to the test."

Rambles and conversations like those were not at all uncommon, and Mrs. Dane taxed her ingenuity to throw the young people together on all proper occasions.

One afternoon Mr. Vinton called, and, learning that Augusta had gone to the city, but would be back on a certain boat, volunteered to take his team of bays and escort the girl from the boat-landing. The road ran through the marsh for a half a mile or more. When the tide came in, the only land visible was the roadway, some thirty feet wide, forming an elevation of three or four feet above the salt marsh.

Mr. Vinton was on hand when the boat landed, secured his prize at the wharf, and started home with her. By this time the sun was down, the fog was coming in thick and heavy; nothing could now be discerned at a greater distance than thirty feet. Suddenly the horses took fright at some imaginary objects, and, shying to the right, ran off the roadway down into the rising tide. Happily the carriage was not upset, but stood nearly up to the axles in mud and water. The horses floundered and were helpless. Mr. Vinton was badly frightened, and, without hardly knowing what he did, jumped out of the conveyance, waded ashore and started on a run up the roadway towards Judge Dane's, shouting for help at every step.

He met an expressman going to the wharf, who volunteered assistance. When they reached the carriage Augusta was found still in her seat, lines in hand, endeavoring to hold and pacify the frightened horses. She was carried to the

roadway by the expressman, while Mr. Vinton stood shivering on the embankment. The horses and vehicle were then extricated from their perilous position by the sturdy driver, and Augusta was placed in her carriage in safety.

Mr. Vinton, realizing that his horses, wagon and companion were all safe, thanked the expressman heartily for the assistance rendered. Taking his seat by the side of the girl, he exclaimed with much earnestness, "I admire you very much, Augusta, for the nerve and composure you have displayed in this trying ordeal."

"I feel gratified for this mark of your esteem, Mr. Vinton," she replied in cold, cutting words, "*and am sorry that I cannot return the compliment.*"

From the date of our story's commencement a year had passed. Untiring devotion and continuity of purpose upon the part of Mr. Vinton, aided by the influence of her parents, had won Augusta's consent to give her hand and unite her fortunes with those of this fastidiously-educated son of a worthy, wealthy old farmer. The marriage of Vernon Vinton and Augusta Dane was solemnized in a quiet, dignified, unostentatious way, surrounded by their parents, near relatives and a few personal friends.

Life passed pleasantly with the young couple for two years or more. Mr. Vinton, not being disposed to follow the rural occupation of his father, conceived, as he afterwards expressed it, that he "was educated for something better than digging in the ground." The newly wedded pair consequently oscillated between the towns, and lived on the substance of their fathers, until the breaking out of the silver excitement in Nevada. Thither Mr. Vinton went, leaving his wife with her parents.

In the new Territory he found much confusion and great difficulty in getting satisfactorily settled in business. For a time he tried prospecting and staking out claims, but was unfortunate in always sticking his pins in the wrong place. Finally, as a last resort, he turned his attention to politics, which were for the first time bubbling up in the organization

of the new territorial government. By tact, energy and considerable maneuvering, Mr. Vinton secured a favorable position in an official capacity in Storey county.

After a few months of successful work, and feeling secure in his place, he wrote the following letter to his wife:

"VIRGINIA CITY, NEV., Feb. 1st, 1859.

"MY DEAR AUGUSTA:—After several months of silence and uncertainty, I am now in a position to support you here in Virginia City. I have had a hard trial of it, but my love for you has nerved my arm in the darkest hour. The town is building up very rapidly, and it is getting to be quite a respectable place. Ladies, it is true, with whom I could wish you to associate are scarce. Men of every class and condition are here in great numbers. The silver mines are evidently the richest in the world. I think a great future is opening up for this cis-sierra country. I have secured rooms and board for both of us at one of the most respectable boarding houses in the city. My father will furnish you with all the money you need for the journey. Come up the river to Sacramento City; then take the stage by way of Carson City. It will not be necessary for you to have an escort; the route is perfectly safe, and you may anticipate an exciting trip at this season of the year. Come as soon as you can make it convenient. I shall be waiting and watching for you.

"Your devoted

"VERNON VINTON."

Augusta read the letter to her mother, and the mother read it to her husband to get his opinion relative to the propriety and expediency of Augusta undertaking the journey alone.

"I see no difficulty in the way," said the Judge. "This is a civilized country, full of gallant men, who are always willing and ready to aid a woman in every emergency."

Mrs. Dane suggested that, while admitting that there were many gallant gentlemen almost everywhere, nevertheless there were many rogues and libertines always on the lookout for unsophisticated girls and good-looking women, especially when traveling alone.

"Augusta," replied the Judge, "has a mind remarkably well matured for one of her years, which, together with her home training and religious influence, makes her proof

against every encroachment upon her dignity as a lady. Make all necessary preparations," continued the Judge. "I will go as far as the city with her to-morrow, and see her off on the afternoon boat for Sacramento."

Everything was arranged for her departure, and, after bidding an affectionate adieu to her mother, younger sister and brother, Judge Dane took charge of Augusta, and, always as good as his word, saw her safe on the Sacramento boat. Nothing of importance transpired on the way up the river. 'Tis true everything was strange and new to Augusta; it being her first trip beyond a day's journey, she felt that heart-ache which possesses one for the first time leaving home, relatives, friends and childhood's associations for a strange and unknown country.

Upon arriving at Sacramento, Mrs. Vinton took rooms at the Arcade Hotel, where she remained until 9 o'clock next day.

While paying her bill at the hotel counter she made inquiries relative to the leaving of the stage, the difficulties of the route, and the possible company she would have on her trip over the mountains.

"I don't know," replied the clerk, "of any one who is going over this morning, with the exception of Mr. Barring here."

At the mention of his name, Mr. Barring, a square-built, thick-set, red-faced, fair-complexioned, grey-eyed man, of about thirty years, turned from the jet where he was engaged lighting his cigar and approached the spot where the clerk and Augusta were conversing.

"Mr. Barring," said the clerk, "this lady, Mrs. Vinton, is on her way to Virginia City to meet her husband, who is in business there. Never having traveled over the mountains, she is desirous of learning the difficulties of the way and the probable company she will have."

Mr. Barring, bowing, and with a mellow German accent in his pronunciation, said: "I am happy to know you Mrs. Vinton. I am well acquainted with your husband; in fact,

we are fast friends. As to the journey, there are no obstacles in the way. 'Mountain Charlie,' the old line stager, will handle the ribbons this morning, and his reputation as a driver is such that passengers feel perfectly secure while under his guidance. I fear your company on the journey will be indifferent. There are, I believe, none others than the driver and myself going over this morning; but any assistance we can render you will certainly be freely given."

"Thank you, sir," replied Augusta, reservedly; "my baggage is to follow me. I shall, therefore, be unincumbered; consequently, shall need no special attention."

At this, she bowed and retired, followed by the scrutinizing gaze of Fritz Barring.

"By jingo!" he exclaimed, when the door closed behind the retreating form of Augusta, "she is as pretty as a pink and as sharp as a two-edged razor; but I'll bet a cask of old corn whisky that I'll make an impression on her before we reach Virginia City."

"Be cautious, my dear Barring," replied the hotel clerk, jestingly; "that Nevada husband of hers may lay you out, when you will need your best brands of fire-water for *post-mortem* preservation."

"Never fear," rejoined Barring, with a knowing wink. "Vinton is a poor, simple fellow, 'so child-like and bland' that I can pull the wool over his eyes a foot deep, and make him believe the moon is made of green cheese."

At 9 o'clock, everything being in readiness, the stage rolled off from Sacramento to the mountains, with only Mrs. Vinton and Mr. Barring inside, and the driver outside on his elevated seat

Nothing of note transpired during the day. Mr. Barring was very attentive to every want of his fair companion. Their conversation was rambling and disconnected, with long pauses between.

Fritz Barring was a consummate judge of human nature, and he spent the day in getting down to the bottom facts connected with the disposition and nature of Augusta.

He soon learned that any direct advance would ruin all his future prospects, and that the only conceivable way into her good graces was polite attention and a respectful distance. But the difficulties in the way of a conquest only inspired him with the determination to ultimately win the prize he had set his heart on. Mr. Barring flattered himself that he had power as a fascinator. Having a comely person, great continuity of purpose, and possessing ample means accumulated in the wholesale liquor trade, he felt that he could afford to wait, work and plot.

The stage halted at Placerville for dinner and a change of horses, after which the party began to ascend the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas. The sun went down in a bank of amber clouds, and the weird shadows of night reclined against the hills, in the eastern wake of every tree and shrub, like huge serpents in repose. The stage finally reached an eminence from whence the Sacramento valley, old Mount Diablo further west, and then the marginal boundary of the great ocean beyond, all appeared in one grand view like a vast panorama spread out before the wondering travelers. Slowly the stage wound around the peaks and crags, until at the "witching hour of night" it had neared the summit of the high Sierras. The moon, half full, hung over the western horizon, with her oblique rays shooting upward like silver bars streaming and mingling with shadows of the murmuring pine forest that skirted and darkened the road on every side.

He who has the nerve to stand and fight
  When others fainting fall
To face the robber's knife by night,
  At love or friendship's call,
To shield a woman in her fright
  From insult and from harm,
Hath made an impress pure and bright
  In her affections warm.

Rounding a sharp curve in the road, a deep, hoarse voice before the team cried "Halt!" and at the same time a rough hand seized the bridles of the leaders.

"Kick out of the boot Fargo's strong box, my boy," said another voice at the driver's side.

"Well, put up your shootin' irons. We don't propose to fight you," replied the driver, in a troubled tone.

"Never mind the pistols," rejoined the robber, in a harsh, threatening voice; "we won't use them if you do our bidding. Hurry up and pitch out that box."

"Thar ain't nothin' in it, nohow," said the driver, as he handed the booty to the highwayman.

"Who's in here?" exclaimed one of the robbers, as he opened the door of the stage, and peered within.

"A lady and myself," said Mr. Barring.

"Well, Myself, you get out, and your lady ditto."

"You don't propose to harm a lady, do you?" inquired Barring, contemptuously.

"Hold your chops, Myself; this is my show, and I propose to run it without your aid; so get out on the double quick or I'll go through you with a dose of brimstone and metallic salts."

Mr. Barring, feeling that resistance would be in vain, and might result in the injury of Mrs. Vinton, moved cautiously out of the stage, and, when fairly landed, turned, as if to assist Augusta to alight. The robber, observing this, said:

"Stand out from the stage, Myself, and throw up your hands. Bob," he continued, addressing his companion, "watch this fellow, while I go after the woman. Step out, please, Miss or Madam, or whatever you are," said he, addressing Mrs. Vinton.

"For what reason shall I get out? If your purpose is only robbery, I will deliver all I have of value without further controversy."

"Never mind about my *purpose;* my order is for you to get out, which you had better do without further talk."

At this Augusta left the stage and leaned against the right hind wheel for support. The burly fellow approached her and peered into her face that looked like chiseled marble in the receding light of the moon.

"By Gorry!" he exclaimed, "she's a duck of the first water; fit to be a highwayman's wife. Will you grant me a single kiss?" continued he, approaching nearer and nearer, stretching out his hands as if about to clasp Augusta in his arms.

Barring, who stood only a few feet from the robber, had been so intently watching this part of the play, that he lost sight of the part he was taking. So, when he observed the lusty fellow's proposition to take hold of Augusta, he could endure the suspense no longer; and, as if started by dynamite, he bounded on his victim with such impetuosity that the highwayman was forced over the precipice to the left of the road, down which he went tumbling and cursing, until his voice was lost in the distance.

At this crisis, "Bob," who was appointed to guard Barring as well as to hold the horses, feeling that the contest was growing desperate, let go the team and commenced shooting at Barring, who, realizing his peril, drew his revolver and returned the fire.

In the affray the horses became unmanageable and started down the grade on a run, which the driver did not appear anxious to check.

Augusta, who had been leaning against the stage wheel in a half-unconscious state, was thrown to the ground when the horses started. Here she lay between the two remaining combatants, who were discharging their pistols at a rapid rate over her prostrate form. At every shot an advance was made until they stood face to face at the feet of Augusta, striking at each other with their empty smoking revolvers.

Both men were evidently wounded. Their struggles brought them nearer and nearer to the border of the yawning gulf. Mr. Barring felt the supreme moment had come, and, with a superhuman effort, swung his antagonist over the brink, saving himself only by clutching a sapling on the margin of the road; and the robber went tumbling down the steep declivity, carrying with him the greater part of Barring's coat.

For a time the trees and mountain peaks seemed to swim and whirl about him. By degrees he gained strength and composure.

Augusta still lay on the ground unconscious. Mr. Barring endeavored to arouse her, but in vain. Taking up a handful of snow, which covered the ground, he placed it on Augusta's forehead, which soon caused her to revive. Looking about in bewilderment, she exclaimed:

"Where am I?"

"You are," said Mr. Barring, "on the top of the Sierra Nevada mountains, alone with me, after a terrible struggle with a couple of villainous robbers."

"Oh, yes; I remember now," said she, pressing her hands to her temples. "It seems to me more like a terrible dream than reality. Where is the stage?" she enquired.

"In the encounter with the robbers the horses took fright and ran off down the grade with the driver."

"What has become of the robbers?" she continued.

"The last I saw of them, they were going over that precipice. I guess they have landed 'where the woodbine twineth.' In fact," he continued, "I think I have made angels out of them."

"How in the world did you do it, and what possessed you?"

"Well," said Mr. Barring, in a husky voice, "when that villain attempted to put his hands on you, I considered it my duty as a gentleman, at all hazards, to protect you from insult; so when his disposition was fully indicated, I went after him like the wind, and, a moment after, he was going it rough-and-tumble, with numerous boulders, down that declivity. At this moment, the horses being released, started off with a bound; you, leaning against the wheel, were thrown to the ground. This brought me face to face with my second antagonist, who commenced firing at me. In sheer self-defense I returned the fire, and after the last shot we met at your feet, hitting each other over the head with our empty revolvers. Then we clinched. I, having the advantage of

position, *he* was taken, and *I* left, hanging to that sapling, with my coat-tails gone, as you may observe."

"Are you hurt?" Augusta inquired anxiously.

"Well, not seriously, I think, although I have a hole through my left arm and a cut across my shoulder."

"Where?"

"Just here," said he, pulling off his coat and exhibiting a shirt sleeve saturated and dripping with blood.

She ripped off one of the flounces from her dress and bound it tightly around the wounded arm.

At this moment "Mountain Charlie" came cautiously around a curve in the road, and, speaking in a hoarse, agitated voice, said:

"Mr. Barring, are you dead entirely?"

"No, Charlie, not entirely, but nearly. Where's your team?"

"Around the corner—half a mile."

"Can't you return with it?"

"No," replied the driver; "the road is so narrow you couldn't turn a pig with a long tail in it."

"I fear," said Mr. Barring, addressing Mrs. Vinton, "that you cannot walk so far?"

"Yes," she replied, "I feel quite strong after that draught of drifting snow."

Mr. Barring then gave Augusta his right arm. Charlie shouldered Wells, Fargo's box, which lay on the ground undisturbed, and the party reached the stage after a fifteen minutes' walk. When the strong box had been restored to its hiding place and the parties were all in position, the old coach bowed as the weary horses moved on at a jogging trot.

Nothing more of interest transpired until the stage reached Carson City, where the wounds of Mr. Barring were properly dressed, and Mrs. Vinton was allowed sufficient time for rest and refreshment. In the afternoon, the parties, with some others, took passage to Virginia City, where they arrived after a drive of two or three hours.

Mr. Vinton received his wife with open arms, and when the adventures of the previous night were related he called Barring a brave fellow and heartily thanked him for the service he had rendered Augusta in the tribulations through which they had passed. Mr. Barring concluded to take rooms at the ——— House with the Vintons, where Augusta was very attentive to his injuries, but they proved after all to be only flesh wounds, and he soon recovered from their effects.

CHAPTER II.

PERSEVERANCE, thou art a treasure,
Grander than all the jewels of the world!
Before thy unbending will
Wealth and beauty and the iron hand
Of fate, in submission, bend and sway
Like willow boughs before a strong north wind.

"GOOD morning, Semblens; you are the very man I have been looking for," said Fritz Barring one fine morning two weeks after his skirmish with the robbers on the mountain. "Come into my private club-room; there we will be alone. I have something of a love affair to tell you that lies very near my heart."

"I am astonished at such a declaration from you, Fritz Barring," replied the wit, "for this is the very first intimation I ever had that you carried any such thing as a heart about you."

"Now, Semblens, don't begin your nonsense," replied Barring, impatiently.

"I tell you there is no joke about it, Brink;" he continued, turning and addressing his bar-tender; "send into the dark room a basket of Veuve Cliquot, and a bottle of our best Old Rye. Come, Sem, I am impatient of this delay. I want you to hear my story, and then give me counsel."

Taking his friend by the arm he led him into a room 12x 14 feet in size. At its southern end there were two small windows elevated from the ground fully ten feet, having heavy dark curtains drawn before them. The room contained two round gaming tables covered with green baize, a hanging lamp chandelier, some cane-bottom chairs, a lounge, a dark ingrain carpet, and numerous playing-cards scattered on the table and about the room.

"Now, Sem," said Barring, as he twisted off the wire that held the cork of a champagne bottle, "smile with me over this superb wine, and then I will tell you what I know about love by moonlight, with pistols for two."

"I am ready," said Semblens.

"Well, my boy," began Barring, after he had drained his second glass, "you have, of course, heard of my fight with the robbers on the top of the Sierras, and how I bucked them off the bluff, and all that, and what a lion I have been in town ever since. Now, the secret I wish to tell you is; that that night's experience with the robbers and that charming woman has stuck me so close to her skirts that I am bound to win her, hit or miss. I am already down in her good graces for the gallant part I took in the affair, for every time she meets me she extends her lovely hand and says: 'How do you do, Mr. Barring? I hope for your speedy recovery. Are you sure you are not acting injudiciously in traveling about the streets, wounded as you are?' And as she speaks she looks in my eyes with so much concern that at times I feel a streak of conscience cross me, like cold water running through a blazing fire, and I waver in my intent in plotting to win her from duty for a sordid purpose. With my words and money I have won others, now no longer loved but lost, and in their misery I have reveled; but of them all, this one is much the fairest, purest, yet most unconscious of her charms. Now, Semblens, what I wish to know of you is, how best can I storm the approaches of her heart and reach the heavenly fortress of her love, guarded and draped about as it is with silken awnings?"

"Barring," replied his companion, after a pause, "do I understand that it is your intent and cold design to pull down to your own degraded level the heavenly creature which you have described, and by your insidious wiles sever the ties which bind her to her home and husband, putting the bitterness of gall and wormwood into the honeyed heart of a lovely virtuous woman, all for no other purpose than that your insatiate lust may revel in her charms? No, truly,

Barring; although I count you as a friend, and would serve you in all things honorable, I cannot lend my hand or soul to aid you in this villainous purpose. While adverse circumstances and temptations sore have often led me into walks and ways forbidden by the golden rule, yet the narrow path of duty, to my mind, was always clear, and at every fall I have clambered up again, possessed with new resolves."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Barring; "stop your moral lecture; it is too good to waste on me. Go tell it to old Deacon Daniels; perhaps he will let you speak it in his church. At least, I am not in a mood to hear it now. Take another smile at this, old companion; then surely you'll feel better and tempered down to the business."

"Such persuasive arguments strike me in a tender place," replied Semblens. "You deserve success in all things right, because of your persistence; but you cannot accomplish this wicked wish, dear Barring, because the wife has a watcher who will run you through before you're fairly started in your nefarious work. Besides, the moral sense of the community is against you; and withal, that woman was born and bred in the lap of virtue."

"Another lecture," said Barring, pouring out a wine-glass of Bourbon, and handing it to his companion. "Take this, and you will soon be tempered to my liking; and while it is working on your nerves, since lectures are in order, I will give one which you shall not forget; and if I chance to speak a little harsh, remember that I mean it all."

At this, he arose from his seat, and, after pacing to and fro across the room, stopped on the opposite side of the table, where his companion sat. With a flushed face and blood-shot eyes, he thus began:

"With the assumed wisdom of an owl, you have been lecturing me to-day on subjects about which you appear to be as ignorant as a new-born babe. You have palavered over an assumed principle of honor, of integrity, and of virtue. Abstractly considered, I view the whole moral code, as generally understood, as a myth and a fallacy; that love,

honor and virtue exist only in degree, and that degree is controlled by the circumstances which surround them. What am I, and why am I here, with all my intense passions and prejudices? Go with me to my childhood's recollection of my grandfather. To my knowledge, he was a prosperous liquor dealer, who inherited from his parents a low degree of moral force. My father was trained by him from boyhood in the same business. My mother, by nature, was a well-meaning, strong-willed woman; while my father, in disposition, hardened by intemperance, was, in all things animal, my counterpart magnified. Before and after birth, I lived continually in the atmosphere of the beer-barrel. When ten years old I was stationed behind a counter, and from there dealt out consuming fire in a gambler's hell, where revelry, robbery and general dissipation knew no bounds. Thus I grew, with my naturally intense passions pampered and my moral perceptions blunted. Now, you say that with all my evil tendencies, hereditary and acquired, I have moral perception sufficient to know the right, and follow it if I so willed. You are at fault in mistaking this faculty of will-power. Why does not the stone, when tossed in the air, fall heavenward? Why does not the river run up-hill? The air doth bear them upward. The feather floats therein; why not the stone? Because, from their very nature, a stronger power pulls them downward—a natural condition, over which they have no control. So with man; he is the creature which circumstances have made him. Some of the conditions of his mind or body, or both, whether of good or evil import, may be traced back through generations of his ancestry. Had my father married a different woman, or my mother had a different husband, I would not, to-day, be Fritz Barring, but, instead, perhaps, an elder of the church, a highwayman or a lawyer. The most ignorant peasant knows well enough the value of blood in stock. He spares no pains or expense to breed up his horses, cows and hogs to the most approved standard; while for himself, and his children after him, without any concern for the character of

his progeny, he herds with the *goats* of human society. Don't tell me, then, that I am altogether to blame for what I am. The leopard cannot change his spots; neither will the sow leave her wallow. The sin and misery of the world is in great part due to the ignorance of the natural laws which move human beings to action. The disposition of sanctified fanatics and long-faced hypocrites to condemn every apparent wrong, without seeking the cause which led to it, has imprisoned the desolate, homeless wanderer for taking a crust of bread, while the gilded murderer is passed with the waving of hands and shouts of triumph. You say that 'Virtue hath its reward.' In what does that reward consist? In this age of the world, apparently, to be despised and spat upon. Take the peasant, or poor man in the street, who faithfully toils from day to day for the merest pittance of a living; set him up by the man of wealth, however mercenary may have been his methods in obtaining it, and the gaping crowd will swing their hats at sight of the golden calf, and jeer the honest man out of countenance. Then, away from me, with your obsolete chidings! Like pills, they are fit only for babes and puppies. I have wealth; how acquired is nobody's business. Unburthened by conscience, I have health and strength to enjoy whatever I can find to satisfy a passion or confer a pleasure. I have set my heart upon Mrs. Vinton. She shall be mine in spite of fate; and you shall help me get her. That thousand-dollar note you owe me is overdue. You do my bidding and it shall be cancelled, and as much more placed at your command. But dare you 'cheep' a word of my hellish purpose, I will crush you to the earth, and grind your life out by dogging you wherever you go. As for Vinton, he cannot possibly secure the position to which he aspires without my aid. I hold the balance of political power in this town, and he knows it. Whisky, rightly directed, is king of the ballot-box. With my little brown jug and this adamantine will, backed by a mine of gold, I can warp and bend so low the morals of this confounded town as to select whoever I will. And he who has

tasted the corruptible sweets of public plunder, in order to get pack into a warm place again, will sacrifice honor, integrity and family. Therefore, I shall be in Vinton's good graces for the next six months, at least. I shall have the sweet Augusta, with compliments, thrust upon me; and she, realizing the power I hold over her husband's political fortunes, will smile upon me, and perchance I will have the exquisite pleasure of leaving her man at home, and going alone with the lady to some fantastic party."

* * * * *

A month had passed since the discussion chronicled in the preceding section. Fritz Barring's down-town saloon was again the centre of much attraction. A political contest was at hand. Vernon Vinton had, by Barring's assistance and manipulation, secured a prominent recognition for a position which he greatly coveted. Jones was an aspirant for Congressional honors. These two worthies and other lesser political lights made Fritz Barring's saloon the head centre of all political plots. His wishes were consulted, for it was felt that he held a club over every fellow's head sufficiently powerful to make or break all his political prospects.

"Well, Barring," said Jones, as he with several other politicians entered the dark, or "green" room, (as the one we have previously described was indiscriminately called), "we come to you as chairman of the acting Central Committee, to inquire what will be, or has been the assessment levied against us which is considered necessary to insure the several officers to which we aspire?"

"Well," replied Barring, "the committee has discussed the matter to which you refer, but has not as yet reached any definite conclusion. My colleagues have been very busy prospecting their several mining claims, and are anxious that I should take the whole responsibility of conducting the fight and to provide the ways and means for so doing. Now, before we proceed further in this business, come let us try a glass of this old sherry; it is said to have come around

the Horn in '49, and has ever since been stowed away in one of San Francisco's dark cellars until recently, when it was brought to light, and I am the fortunate purchaser. Here's success to our friends, and dismay and defeat to our opponents who are trying for the appointments."

After a hearty drink all round, Barring proceeded: "Now, boys, we have a great deal of hard work to do in order to win this contest. Our opponents are strong and determined, and have a sackfull of money to back them. We must furnish as much money as they, and use it more judiciously. You speak of the head of the opposition element as being a very strong man, with the popular current in his favor. This is very evidently correct, as to the common understanding of what constitutes popularity. But I tell you that the most popular man is the candidate who has no antecedents, and was never heard of in a general way until nominated. Dark horses have won in nearly all the important political races since the days of Andrew Jackson, and they are likely to continue in the same successful line to the end of the chapter. The truly great men of the country have been 'sat down upon' by political conventions from time immemorial, and nondescripts selected in their stead. The reason is plain. The wisest and most worthy men have positive convictions. In this age of the world men of positive opinions and deeds have positive enemies, and jealousy is so nearly akin to hatred that they stalk about wrapped up in the same cloak. There is something in the make-up of the average man that sends the dagger of envy through his heart at the sight of others towering above him, and, like the bat at noonday, would blot out all light beyond his reach. No successful public man can be a true reformer. If he starts out with that idea, and is carried to power on the fickle tide of popular favor, he sets the cunning men and thieves in all the land against him, who forthwith commence to plot for his destruction; while all worthy people swing their hats at his reforms, and then go home and go to bed. So it is to-day. Your head opponent has secured some con-

gressional reforms for the raiders of this sage-brush country; but, my friends, be assured that if you give me half my way, we will beat him so badly that his mother will not know him when the cruel war is over. *How?* This way. Place ten thousand dollars in my hands (I cannot do with less), and leave the rest to me. I understand the ropes. How shall I proceed? I'll tell you. We have only one daily and one weekly paper published in this burg. We must secure them both. Difficult? Not much! Coin is all that's needed. A successful newspaper is like a corporation; it hasn't any soul. They are run in the interest of their promoters. If they can favor the current notions of the public, and at the same time favor their own prosperity, they are only too glad to serve the dear people. Pecuniary difficulties are the rule, rather than the exception, in the quill-men's experience, and those who have never been there can hardly realize the influence ducats have in tempering editorials. Even if the average editor is honest in his determination to do the public a service, the starch is all squeezed out of him before he's fairly started; for he must attack abuses wherever found. In so doing, he unearths frauds and corrupt practices, which involve the standing of the pimps and sharps of every community. The people applaud his grit and independence until he gets into a difficulty in consequence of his revelations; then, like a fellow who suddenly finds himself in a hornet's nest, everybody halloas, 'Run, you ninny! Why did you get into such a scrape?' Trust the craft with me; I know where to find its weak spots. The whole community must be set by the ears, by exciting its prejudices and antipathies; thus we drive every fellow into the political traces of his party—save only the saloon men and the bums under their control, who, if judiciously handled, constitute the balance of power in every partisan contest. This large force is always thrown where it will do the most good."

In checks and money, the amount demanded was handed over to him as a "Secret Service Fund," to be paid out by him in his discretion.

"Now, good night, my friends," said Barring, rising; "we will go into the fight to win, leave the details to me, and be always on the watch for breakers."

Ten minutes after the party retired, Vernon Vinton made his appearance in the green room.

"Glad to see you, friend Vinton," exclaimed Barring, extending his hand. "Be seated. Take a little of this light wine; it will do you good. Now tell me what I can do for you, for I am entirely at your service."

"Well," replied Vinton, "you know, my friend, I am a candidate for an appointment of some consequence, and, knowing your influence in this district, I wish to secure it in my favor. I am aware that I shall have much opposition. In the contest, money and the best manipulated work will succeed. For expenses I am willing to contribute my due proportion, besides owing you no small favor if you will aid me in this matter."

Barring felt that he had reached a nice point, which, if judiciously handled, could be turned to solid account, and, consequently, in his blandest and most familiar way, replied:

"My dear Vinton, I am only too glad of an opportunity to serve you. So far as your contribution is concerned, you may leave a few hundred if you so desire, but I care not for your money. It is your esteem and friendship that I most desire. I count you a good friend in need, and shall spare no time or cost to make your fortune, which you will surely have if selected for this lucrative office. Leave me to my methods, Vinton; follow my advice, and I will pull every political rope so evenly that no one will suspect who is the manipulator."

"I sincerely thank you, Barring, for this mark of your esteem. Here is five hundred dollars to be used by the committee, of which you are the honored head; and if you desire more or any other favor from me, command, and I obey."

"Thanks," said Barring; "there is nothing now for me to crave, only one small favor, which to you is but a trifle, but to me it will add much pleasure."

"Name it, dear Barring. Speak at once."

"Well, it is only this. You know my business here is such that the better classes of society rather shun me. Last week, the party on the hill was held without my presence, because I had no card. Now, had I a friend at Court, the halls of fashion would be open to my tread. You understand. Mr. Vinton, can you help me in this matter?"

"I will, dear Barring, help you all I can to every circle in which we move. There will be a social time up town one week hence. My wife has been importuning me to go, but I cannot do so on account of the press of this confounded business. If desired, she will go with you as my substitute. The party will not likely be the most select; but then it will be good, for many of the best people of the town are going."

"A thousand thanks, dear Vinton. I will accept your generous offer, for I know it's freely given. Good-bye, my friend, remember this your dearest promise, and I will turn the tables in your favor for a good fat office, so surely as water runs down hill."

* * * * *

When informed by her husband that it had been arranged that she should go with Mr. Barring to the party, Augusta appeared disposed to rebel. Nevertheless, when assured by Mr. Vinton that he was under many obligations to the saloon-keeper for services rendered and prospective, and that his whole political future depended on the good-will and support of this man and a few of his friends engaged in the same business, over whom Barring had great influence, and, further, that it would be impossible for him to go with her to the social, on account of the political meeting appointed for the same evening, at which he and other aspirants were expected to be present for council and orders, she with reluctance, assented to the arrangement, and agreed to do all she could to make the occasion a pleasant one for her forced associate. On the appointed evening, precisely at nine o'clock, Fritz Barring appeared at the waiting-room door of the boarding house, dressed in black beaver pants

and coat, a white vest with quartz buttons set in gold, a blue neck-tie with the ends hanging over his faultless shirt front which was ornamented with a row of gold buttons running up the centre pleat. A heavy solid fob chain with an immense seal attached hung from his watch-pocket, fastened up to the center button hole of his vest with an elaborate loop, while his polished leather boots and glossy silk hat appeared to vie with each other as if to see which would outshine. His long, light mustache was waxed and curled, and looked like miniature horns sticking out. His ample goatee was also waxed and spread out from his chin like a fan, cut square across on a line with his blue neck-tie. His hair was short and glossy, with the best brand of bear's oil, while the expression of his round grey eyes and the contour of his face clearly indicated that he was a good liver, and a man of the world withal. Mrs. Vinton was in waiting and received Mr. Barring gracefully. Her appearance was certainly charming. A very dark blue silk was the material which composed her dress, the color tending greatly to heighten the charms of her clear complexion. A black lace scarf draped lightly on the right side of the skirt and passing across the waist was fastened to the left shoulder by a simple pearl pin, the wedding gift of her husband. Her wealth of dark hair was loosely coiled on the back of her shapely head, and the happy light emanating from her luminous eyes completed the picture.

When ready to depart, a hack was on hand to convey them. The appointed place was reached in a few minutes. It was comfortably filled with a promiscuous crowd which had already commenced the pleasurable pastime of the "light fantastic toe." The matron, maid, servant girl and Spanish señorita were all there; for in those days women in Virginia City were scarce, and precious as diamonds from South Africa. The multiplicity of styles and colors worn by the ladies would have confused and astonished the fashionable world. The Spanish girls especially were in all their glory, with light inexpensive dresses flounced and sashed about with many

different colors, which, coupled with their grace of movement, made them an attractive feature of the party.

The men, principally miners and merchants who had been attracted to the country from the four quarters of the globe in consequence of the metallic discoveries, were, if anything, more diversified in dress and nationality than the women.

In those days, boots, pants, a woolen shirt, generally of fine material and elaborately finished, with a leather belt around the waist, constituted the miner's average outfit. Many thus appeared in the room, while others wore the addition of a coat without any vest. "All went as merry as a marriage bell," until it was nearly midnight. Some of of the men were evidently drinking, for at times they lost decorous balance. Among this number was one Lo. Loreno, a man of mixed Indian and Spanish blood. He was well-proportioned, rather heavy set, about thirty years old, and had a low, receding forehead, with black hair, eyes of the same color, high cheek bones, and a heavy, dark mustache, which almost concealed a villainous-looking mouth. He was dressed in high-heeled boots, striped pants, a calico shirt and a short well-worn, navy-blue coat.

Several times during the evening he had endeavored to scrape an acquaintance with Mrs. Vinton; but having had no introduction to him, she refused to notice several remarks of his, that were evidently intended for her.

Finally, approaching to where she was seated for a rest after an exciting and exhaustive quadrille, and while Mr. Barring was absent for a lemonade, Loreno, half intoxicated, caught Augusta by the arm, and said: "Come, Señorita, take we waltz."

"Sir!" replied Mrs. Vinton, looking up in astonishment at the impudence of the fellow.

"Me want you come have one waltz with me," exclaimed Loreno, as he pulled Augusta half off her seat.

Jesse Blanding, who was nick-named "Pike," had been intently watching the vaquero, and, advancing quickly before any one understood his purpose, hit Loreno a fearful blow

on the side of his head, sending the ungallant half-breed sprawling on the floor.

In a moment all was confusion. A general fight seemed imminent; every man appeared to have a pistol. The women went screaming from the hall; the dance was entirely broken up, and many who were there felt relieved to get out of the place alive and unharmed.

CHAPTER III.

He who has the nerve to work and wait—
With a full measure of fortitude
For each anxious, trying hour,
Will surely win in every race;
Though to our wrapped vision
He seems to run behind.

IN order to chronicle other exciting incidents connected with the thread of our story, we will have for a time to leave Mr. Barring to his planning and plotting, Mrs. Vinton to her society entertainments, and her husband to the important and absorbing duties of the coveted office which he had managed to secure with the aid and assistance of friends, among whom Mr. Barring was the most prominent, and so recognized by Mr. Vinton himself, which debt of *disinterested friendship*, as he was pleased to call it, on the part of Mr. Barring, induced the purblind husband to trust his wife, and insist on her going to entertainments and social gatherings with the man of all other he had most cause to fear and despise.

Jesse Blanding, who struck Lo Loreno at the party previously described, was a light-complexioned, blue-eyed young man of twenty-five summers, and recently from Kentucky, where he left a widowed mother and an only sister, who at the time was just turning her eighteenth year. Jesse, ("Jess," as he was commonly called,) had been educated at and was a graduate of one of the hightoned institutions of learning in Lexington, whither he had been sent at the age of sixteen years, from the old prosperous homestead, situated some twenty miles distant; while Belle, his sister, gracefully grown up on the farm, the companion of her mother, had received a good common-school education in the village adjacent; mornings, evenings and Saturdays assisting in the work of the household.

William Siddon, an orphan boy, raised in the neighborhood by his uncle, had won Belle Blanding's most affectionate regards, and with reason, for he was the soul of honor, with a fixed and steady purpose to build up a home and a name. He likewise had been educated in the district school. For the two or three years next preceding the date at which we write, young Siddon had been renting land and farming on his own account, and with such success as to make several hundred dollars in excess of all liabilities.

Jesse Blanding, upon his return from school with his "diploma," found farm work uncongenial to his disposition and the "cultured conception" of his own superior abilities; consequently, he felt that his college acquirements would be thrown away should he adopt as a calling the avocation which his father and grandfather before him had honored and promoted. He remained at home two full years, idle and listless, Micawber-like, waiting for something to turn up; at times going into Lexington to look after an advertisement calling for a clerk, salesman or book-keeper, which position was invariably found filled upon his application. Finally, becoming disgusted with himself and his surroundings, Jesse resolved on a trip to California, and persuaded his old friend William Siddon, who realized the slim chance a poor man had of getting a good start in "Old Kentucky," to accompany him.

Belle and her mother were, of course, inconsolable at the thought of parting with those they loved best on earth. Jesse laughed the matter off, saying:

"Never mind, Belle. Will and I will soon return, bringing treasures more precious than 'the wealth of Ormuz or of Ind, where kings barbaric shower pearls and gold.'"

William Siddon took the matter more seriously. For a time he wavered between the soft influences of the being he idolized and the stern necessity which appeared to impel him onward.

"Dear Belle," said he, as he held her by the hand at parting, a bright light kindling in his dark eyes, which

made her feel that the highest conception of man's divinity stood before her, "while I should be infinitely happy to be always with you, I have, by nature, too much pride and too much respect for you to ask your hand in marriage until I have hewn out by my own energy a home and a name for you. Although many degrees of latitude may separate us, nevertheless, whatever there may be of *me* worth retaining will be always with you. I have faith in you and in myself, and as surely as the Morning Glory turns to meet the coming sun, I will turn to thee and to thy memory for the life and hope of years to come. Farewell, my darling; this trial and our faith in each consecrated, will be to me, wherever I go, what the lighthouse set far out on the stony reef is to the storm-tossed mariner. To know that you are hoping for me, that your thoughts will turn westward at each setting sun and that I shall be remembered in your prayers will strengthen my fortitude in the darkest hour. Be not troubled about your brother; he shall be guarded as my own, and with him I will share my last dime. Let the old farm continue leased as it is now, and from its rents you and your beloved mother can live in comfort."

This leave-taking over, the young men turned their faces westward, and, after the usual trials and anxieties of the voyage, arrived in California in the fall of 1858. After stopping in San Francisco a few days, they took passage to Sacramento by the river steamer. From thence they started on foot to the mountains. The friends, after much wandering, reached Virginia City about the first of January, 1859, whither many others had gone, tempted by the wonderful discoveries of gold and silver. The young men located claims, built a cabin, and made every arrangement to stay, for they were impressed with the conviction that there was great mineral wealth under or about Mount Davidson.

For some months they labored with increasing prospects, The greatest care and anxiety of Siddon was to keep his friend Jesse "straight." He, being a generous, jolly good fellow, sometimes, when thrown in fast company, would go on a

"tear" around town, drinking and gambling, simply for the fun of the thing. To avert these pranks of his friend, Siddon taxed his ingenuity, and usually kept Jesse well in hand.

On the evening of the party at which he played such a conspicuous part, Jesse would not heed his friend's persuasions to stay at home, saying, as he left the cabin while Siddon was washing the tin plates and other scant table furniture, "I will be a good boy, Will, and shall be home at 10 o'clock."

Part of the consequences of his going to the "fandango" have already been related. The worst yet remains untold.

On a dark, drizzly night in April, when the greater part of the inhabitants of Virginia City were wrapped in slumber, there was music, gambling and revelry in a fashionable gaming house at "Gold Hill," a suburb of the city proper. At a dozen different tables sat dealers of roulette, faro, poker, euchre and "old sledge," with their stacks of gold and silver before them, calling the games. Around the tables stood a score or more of men intently watching, playing, or "bucking at the tiger." At the monte table, with others, stood Jesse Blanding, betting recklessly on single cards. He was evidently drinking heavily, for his gesticulations and occasional yells of delight or despair at every turn in the game, clearly indicated that he was off his balance.

Lo Loreno and another half-blooded Spaniard sat at a table some distance to the left, in low, earnest conversation, watching the players and sipping their beer.

William Siddon hurriedly entered the room, and, advancing, stood by the side of Blanding, of whom he was in search. Jesse was so much interested in the game that he did not observe his friend's presence, and, putting down on a card his last half eagle, exclaimed, "Hit or miss, I go my pile on that ace." His hand had hardly left the money when Siddon grabbed it from the table, saying quietly: "No, Jesse; you must not bet any more to-night. Come, let us go home."

At this the gambler was offended, and, rising from the table, said, as he put his hand in his hip pocket: "Sir, do you propose to interfere with my game?"

"No," replied Siddon, "I only wish to take my friend home, who, you must see, is not in a condition to know what he is about. You certainly do not wish to rob a drunken man."

Without taking any further heed to the gambler's threatening language and attitude, Siddon forcibly pulled Jesse from the table, and, after a struggle, out of the room, and started home with him. Immediately after the friends had departed Lo Loreno was observed to leave by a back door and disappear. As before indicated, the night was dark and stormy, and at the time, one o'clock in the morning, the streets were deserted. Siddon had all he could do to make any headway with his hilarious friend in the direction of their little camp. At times Jesse would stop, and turn back towards the saloon, when a struggle would ensue, accompanied by loud, angry words, intermingled with earnest pleadings. They had proceded thus for several blocks until they reached a lonely spot in the outskirts of the town in which their cabin was situated, when suddenly a dark muffled figure emerged from the ruins of an out-building, and, advancing cautiously, came up closely to the noisy, struggling night-wanderers. After being satisfied of the position of his intended victim, a long double-edged dagger was thrust into the back and through the heart of Jesse Blanding. With a single exclamation, he fell forward from the arms of his friend, to the earth, dead.

Siddon turned to look whence came the blow, but through the thick darkness he could see nothing; then turning quickly to the prostrate form of his friend, and feeling about, he discovered the knife driven to the hilt in his back. Without duly considering what he did the knife was drawn out of the still quivering flesh, while a piercing cry of "Murder!" escaped his lips.

In a few moments several men were on the spot, among them a sleepy policeman. When they arrived, William Siddon was found bending over young Blanding's form, with the bloody knife firmly clenched in his right hand.

"You are my prisoner!" said the policeman, as he secured a firm grip on Siddon's shoulder. "We have caught you in the very act of murder!"

"Caught *me* in the act of murder!" exclaimed Siddon, in astonishment.

"Certainly. You still retain the bloody knife in your hand."

For the first time Siddon realized his embarrassing position. This second unexpected blow to his nervous system was more than it could sustain, and he stood under the hand of the law officer, paralyzed and dumbfounded. In this condition he was led off to the lock-up.

Jesse Blanding's body was taken to the morgue, and, after a *post mortem* examination, was prepared for interment, which occurred fifteen hours after the fatal blow had been struck.

Siddon earnestly desired to see the face of his dear dead friend, but this privilege was denied him, and he was left alone, with the deepest anguish of soul for not only having lost a friend, but for the equally appalling calamity of being wrongfully accused and imprisoned as the slayer of the only brother of his beloved and betrothed, Belle Blanding.

At the preliminary examination before the committing magistrate, a few days later, Siddon was held to answer. There was much delay and long months of waiting before a Grand Jury was impaneled, which next occurred on the 10th day of the following October. On the 21st of that month, that august body reported a true bill against William Siddon for the murder of Jesse Blanding, on the 29th of the previous April.

On the date fixed for the trial, which did not occur nntil September 19th, 1860, the little court-room of Judge Drummond was crowded with idlers, sensation seekers and citizens, summoned for the purpose of selecting a jury. The Honorable Court directed the clerk to call the roll and select a panel from those present for service-

Twelve names were pronounced by the clerk, and as many men took their places in the jury box. P. H. Clayton, the Prosecuting Attorney, appeared for the people, and E. B. Stonehill for the defendant.

"Call the first name on the list, Mr. Clerk," said the Judge, when Mr. Doolittle arose from his chair with his pen behind his ear and in a squeaking voice pronounced the name of John Smith. That individual stood up in the jury box.

"Mr. Smith," said the Prosecuting Attorney, Wellington Steuart, as he lifted from his mouth a huge chew of dilapidated tobacco and pitched it into the nearest spittoon. "How long have you resided in this town last past?"

"About one year."

"What is your business?"

"Mining."

"Are you on the assessment roll for the last fiscal year?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know anything about this case?"

"Well, no; not much."

"Did you read of it in the papers at the time it occurred?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you formed or expressed an opinion as to the guilt or innocence of the accused?"

"Well, no; I think not."

"I'll pass the juror," said the people's counsellor, gnawing another piece of tobacco from half a plug.

Mr. Stonehill, squaring himself in his chair and crossing his legs, while the fingers of his right hand were run vigorously through his short hair that at every stroke assumed a more perpendicular position, began to examine the juror.

"Mr. Smith, you say that you have neither formed nor expressed an opinion as to the guilt or innocence of the accused; nevertheless you admit having read all about the case at the time the murder occurred. Now, the two propositions are incompatible, for to suppose that an intelligent man, as you evidently are, could have read about a murder

case so atrocious and notorious as the one under consideration, and never have formed or expressed an opinion is something beyond our comprehension."

"I may have formed or expressed a qualified opinion," said Smith; "but not one which would influence my judgment against the law and the facts of the case."

"That will do, Mr. Smith, you are excused from serving on this jury. Call another name, Mr. Clerk."

"Michael O'Grady."

"Mr. O'Grady," interrogated the Prosecuting Attorney, "how long have you been in this county?"

"More than a year, yer honor."

"Is your name on the assessment roll for the year last past?"

"Yis, to some extint."

"Have you ever heard anything of this case?"

"Faith, an' I dunno which case you mane."

"It is the case of the people against William Siddon, the prisoner here, who is accused of the killing of one Jesse Blanding, in this city, something over a year since."

"Well, as sure as me name is Michael O'Grady, I never heard of the case until you spake of it."

"Then you never read anything of it in the papers at the time?"

"Niver a bit of it, nor of nothin' else, for I cannot read at all at all; because I was a lone orphan when I was born, and was the same for several years. My mother had to take in washing to support seven younger childer than meself, so ye see me arly tranin' was made up agoin' to gather brush wood in the bog, and milkin' the goat for the Barnies."

"I am satisfied with the juror," said the People's counselor; "take him Mr. Stonehill."

"I will pass him without further question," replied the defendant's counsel. "Call the next."

This process was continued until nine jurors were selected, several of them similar in capacity and attainments to those of Michael O'Grady.

At this point the panel of twenty-four names was exhausted, and the Court issued a special venire to arbitrarily bring in half a dozen of the Micawber class, who are always in waiting when an emergency arises. From this batch the jury was completed, which consisted in great part of men who, although living in Virginia City for a year or more, had never heard or read anything of the case. The trial then proceeded.

The first witness called by the prosecution was the policeman who had conducted William Siddon to the lock-up after the killing of Blanding. He testified that he was passing on his beat when his attention was called to the sound of angry voices in the street, some distance off. "The darkness of the night prevented my seeing anything of the parties to this apparently angry and bitter controversy. I moved cautiously towards the spot whence the sound proceeded; when within thirty or forty yards of the spot I heard the cry of murder. I then rushed on and seized the prisoner at the bar, who at the time, was bending over the body of young Blanding, with this bloody dagger (exhibiting a double-edged knife, with a blade six inches in length) clinched firmly in his right hand. I at once accused him of the crime, and marched him off to the lock-up."

Two or three citizens who were present at the time, gave their testimony, which corroborated the story of the policeman. Several persons had been subpœned as witnesses who were present at the gaming house when Siddon had pulled young Blanding from the monte table, and forcibly took him from the house. The principal of these witnesses was the gambler, engaged at the time, in winning Jesse Blanding's money. He was evidently prejudiced against Siddon for the part he took in the affair, and his testimony was consequently given in the strongest light. He testified in effect, that while quietly dealing a game of monte at a table, around which several friends, including Blanding, were betting small sums, *simply for diversion*, the prisoner at the bar stole his way up to where the young man was stand-

ing, and, after watching the game for a moment, snatched a five dollar piece from the table, which Blanding had just placed upon a card, at the same time pulling him from the table by force, and, after a struggle, out of the room. That some minutes afterwards he went to the door, and heard at a distance angry, excited voices, which he recognized as those of Blanding and Siddon.

The case for the defense was very poorly presented. Mr. Stonehill, a briefless attorney, with but little ability, had undertaken the Kentuckian's case, simply for the hundred dollars which had been offered him, with but little care or concern as to which way the trial terminated. Siddon, being almost a stranger in the place, and consequently having but little knowledge of the comparative value of legal light, employed Mr. Stonehill, because of his availability and low rate of services, for which the prisoner was unable to pay more. The main points brought out in the defense were, the exceptionally good character which Siddon had borne wherever known; the intimate relations of the parties concerned, and the absence of any motive for the commission of the alleged crimo. The evidence being all in, Mr. Claton for the People and Mr. Stonehill for the defense, argued the case at some length, without developing any material points worthy of special mention, other than those already stated.

The learned Judge in giving his charge to the jury rehearsed the testimony in a concise way, and then gave the law which should govern the jury in making up its verdict. His Honor, in summing up, said:

"Gentlemen of the jury, the evidence which has been presented in this case, taken in conjunction with the law governing the same, puts it within your province to find either one of the following verdicts, namely: 'Not guilty,' 'guilty as charged,' or 'guilty of murder in the second degree.' If in your deliberations, a question shall arise in your minds as to the guilt or innocence of the accused, or on any point in the testimony, it is your duty, under the law, to give the prisoner the benefit of every doubt. The Mar-

shal will now take charge of the jury, and confine the members thereof, free from any external influence until further orders from this Court."

The Marshal, as ordered, turned the key on the jury, and left them to deliberate undisturbed. After some controversy, as to the guilt or innocence of the accused, a vote was taken in order to determine the opinion of the several jurors. When counted, there were found to be two for conviction of murder in the first degree, three for murder in the second degree, and seven for acquittal. After the matter had been further argued and discussed, in which all the material evidence was recapitulated, another ballot was taken, when the vote stood: Guilty of murder in the first degree two, guilty of murder in the second degree four, not guilty six. Thus the day was spent by the jury, without any material change in opinions, or in the several votes taken.

All their time, however, was not spent in weighing and arguing this case, for in the meanwhile, dozens of indifferent cigars were converted into smoke which continually filled the room to suffocation, while three or four spittoons were gorged with ambier and cigar stumps; besides much like debris scattered about the room.

"Here, boys," said Michael O'Grady, drawing a flask out of his pocket, "I see ye're getting wary o' this matter, and kind o' restless; now, boys, come and take a small dhrink of ould whiskey, and ye will soon forget all yer troubles."

The bottle was passed, and each juryman took a "shot in the neck," which had a great tendency to soothe and sustain the "inner man."

Dan de Quille, a noted wit and newspaper correspondent, was the jury's chosen foreman. He and others enlivened the tedious hours by the introduction of puns, songs, recitations and exciting stories, some of doubtful moral propriety. Dan had called the bailiff by banging on the door several times during the day; when that functionary would turn the rusty lock with a huge iron key, and open the door sufficiently to get his head into the room, in a hoarse, guttural

voice would pronounce the stereotyped words: "Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed?" "No! no! no!" would be the response from half a dozen voices. "We cannot agree; it is impossible." Without another word, Blackburn, the U. S. Deputy Marshal, would again turn the key, and march back into the Court-room.

"Well, boys," said De Quille, after having walked to and fro across the room in a reflective mood for half an hour after the marshal's last call, "we appear to be in for it. The Court will adjourn within fifteen minutes, until ten o'clock to-morrow. Let's take another vote, and see whether or not hunger, and the prospect of a dreary night's lodging here, with a pair of blankets for two, and a spittoon for a pillow, are sufficient persuaders to induce an agreement. A ballot was accordingly taken, which resulted, six for acquittal, five for murder in the second degree and one for murder in the first degree. "Now, boys," said Dan, "since there is no hope for an agreement, let's have some fun anyway. The plan I have in mind may possibly get us out of the scrape, or perhaps it may cost us a severe reprimand from the Honorable Court. What do you say? Shall we try the experiment?"

"What do you propose?" met him on every hand. Dan straightening himself up to his full height in one corner of the room, and putting on all the mock dignity which he possessed, replied: "Gentlemen of the jury, you have done me the honor to elect me foreman of this honorable body, which is equivalent to saying you desire me to lead. Now, if you are willing to follow without questions and trust to my wits, we will at least have an adventure. What do you say?"

"Go ahead," they all said, with one accord, "and we will be always with you."

"All right," replied Dan. "Now come along, and the first man to flinch shall be shot in the neck." He then stepped to the door and banged heavily thereon with his clinched fist. In a few minutes the key grated in the lock,

the bolt was drawn back with a click, the door opened, and the bailiff pushed his head in with his usual salutation, "Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed?"

"We have," replied Dan.

"Then wait until I inform his Honor."

In a few moments the functionary returned and led the jury into their box, which, upon order of the Court, was "polled" by the clerk, when his Honor, after enveloping his nose in a red silk handkerchief for a "blow," in measured tones demanded: "Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed?"

"We have, your Honor," replied Dan de Quille, rising.

"Mr. Marshal," continued the Judge, "you will pay the jury their fees for three days service on this case."

After the money had been counted out and every juryman had his twelve dollars safely in his buckskin wallet, the Judge again addressing them said:

"Gentlemen, what is your verdict?"

Dan, rising to his feet with all the gravity he could demand, said: "May it please your Honor, we have agreed *to disagree.*"

For a moment or more there was not a sound to be heard. The counsellors, prisoner and spectators glared first at the innocent-looking jurymen, and then at the Court, in blank astonishment, while the learned Judge seemed to have lost his equilibrium. Finally recovering from his surprise he gave the jury a severe reprimand, and sent them back to their smoky, tobacco-stained quarters for the night, where a stewed beef supper and blankets were given them. The night was spent in sleeping, smoking, singing and telling witty stories. Daylight at length dawned, but no verdict. The day was consumed in about the same way the night had been, without reaching any nearer a conclusion. The bailiff was often importuned to inform the Court that an agreement was impossible and they prayed for release, but all to no purpose. The Judge declared that the case had already cost considerable money, and, moreover, there being other suits pending which required immediate action, he could not afford to increase the expense and delay of a new trial.

After the jury had spent two nights and a day in their close quarters they became almost desperate; some of them having mining claims which were considered fabulously rich, declared that they would be financially ruined if not soon released from their involuntary confinement. As the second day wore away, and not discerning any disposition on the part of the Court to discharge them, a compromise was suggested and accepted, by which it was agreed to submit a verdict of murder in the second degree, and recommend the prisoner to the mercy of the Court.

In accordance with this agreement a verdict was made out, signed and delivered, and the jury discharged.

By some unaccountable error this case was reported to have been dismissed, on motion of the prosecuting attorney, P. H. Claton, on the 19th of September, 1860, when in fact this was one of the three convictions for murder found during this term of the Court.

Another seeming error in this obscure and bungling Court record (or in the transcript taken therefrom, as published) is, that the defendant is called "Wm. Sides," when in fact his name was William Siddon. There is also an error in the name of the murdered man who is called "—— Jessup," alias "Pike;" his true name was Jesse Blanding, and he was nicknamed by the miners "Pike."

William Siddon was much affected by the decision; he declared that death was altogether preferable to the disgrace and ruin which this conviction would necessarily entail. The Judge set "Monday next" as the date for passing sentence, and the prisoner was removed from the Court-room, crushed in hope and spirit, and leaning heavily on the arm of the marshal for support.

On the day set for passing sentence on Siddon, the Court-room was well filled, and among the number present Mrs. Vinton.

Since the night of the party, where Jesse Blanding struck Lo Loreno to the floor of the dance-room for insulting her, she had taken a deep interest in the occurrences narrated in

the preceding chapter of this story. Her own mind was fully convinced that Siddon was not guilty of the crime charged against him. With her husband she had several times visited William in the prison, and heard his simple story of the whole affair, of his attachment to young Blanding and betrothal to his sister. Consequently the sympathies of her woman's heart went out for the misfortunes of the young man. She had even gone so far as to see the Honorable Court and plead with him for a light sentence.

Ten o'clock arrived and the session was opened by the Judge ordering the Clerk to read the verdict of the jury against the prisoner, when the Clerk stood up and read:

"We the jury, in the case of the People of Nevada Territory vs. William Siddon, do find the prisoner guilty of murder in the second degree; and recommend him to the mercy of the Court.

(Signed), "DAN DE QUILLE, Foreman."

As the voice of the Clerk died away, the Court asked:

"Has the prisoner at the bar anything to say why sentence should not be passed upon him in accordance with the verdict of the jury?"

William Siddon slowly, and as if with difficulty, arose; his naturally ruddy face was pale and his features haggard. But there was something about his expression and bearing which made everyone present feel that no ordinary man stood before them. His form was commanding, being six feet high, square built, muscular and powerful. His deep, brown eyes sat beneath long, dark eyebrows like living orbs of fire, while his semi-Roman-Grecian nose, coupled with the broad, high forehead above it, indicated character unmistakable. His dark hair hung in careless locks about his ears, while his firmly compressed lips indicated nerve sufficient for every emergency. For more than a minnte after gaining his feet, he stood

Like a statue hewn by some mighty hand,
The model and the master long since lost.

Finally, gaining possession over his feelings just when the silence was becoming oppressive, he spoke as follows:

"If it please the Court, I have something to say. I hope no offense will be taken at my words, for the embarrassing circumstances under which I speak should allow the veil of charity to be thrown around any unguarded remark. I shall not speak with the view of influencing the decision or judgment of the Court, for by the verdict of the jury my good name is blasted; and if future events and revelations do not enable me to establish my innocence of the crime for which I have been convicted, it makes no difference to me whether or not I ever behold the light of Heaven again. I shall not charge any intentional wrong on the part of the jury or witnesses in this case; but since the judgment which your Honor must inevitably render will soon consign me to a place within cold prison walls; and since, in my conception, the attorney for the defense did me more harm than good before the jury and this people, I wish, as a matter of justice to myself, to recapitulate some of the incidents connected with the trial. Some two years ago I left the State of Kentucky with the brother of my affianced wife for California, thence to this Territory. Soon after reaching Virginia City we built a cabin, purchased a little outfit, and commenced keeping house and working our claims. In all our intercourse, reaching back to boyhood, we never exchanged a cross word. Sometimes, since being here, while under the influence of liquor, my friend would, as is usual with a man intoxicated, abuse every one who interfered with his imagined rights or pleasures. Having promised his mother and sister before leaving home that I would use all diligence in keeping the wayward young man within the purview of my influence and protection, on the night of his untimely taking-off, I went to the gambling hell, whither he was often induced to go by boon companions. There I found him deeply intoxicated and betting recklessly. As a friend I could not do otherwise than stop his game and lead him home. In this undertaking I found much difficulty, and

some force had to be used in order to make any headway. While thus struggling through the streets with him in the black darkness of the night, the assassin's knife struck Jesse Blanding's heart before I knew that he was hurt. In a moment he fell from my arms to the earth, dead. Without hardly realizing what I was doing, I drew the knife from the wound, and, at the same time, shouted 'Murder!' when a policeman and some citizens came up, and observing the murderous knife in my hand, accused me of the deed, and I was marched off to prison. The testimony of the witnesses examined in the case fully corroborates this statement of facts. In common law, it is a very well-established principle that there can be no crime without an intent; that there must be an incentive to the act, proved or implied, before conviction can follow. Now, if reviewed, it will be found that there is no part of the testimony which can be construed into a suspicion of a purpose, reason or intent, for my murdering Jesse Blanding. It may be said that I had sufficient provocation to leave him alone in the mud for the night. But what incentive can be imagined that would induce a sane person to murder an intoxicated man simply because he was unruly, and more especially when that man was my best friend.

"Now, if your Honor please, I will turn to the make-up of the jury which tried this case; not that I propose to reflect seriously upon the action of the gentlemen composing the panel, but to show the absurdity of precedent, law and usage governing in such cases. To complete the jury twenty-nine men were examined, consisting of the twenty-four regularly summoned, and five or six subsequently brought in from the curbstone by the Deputy Marshal, on a special venire of the Court. In the examination of these twenty-nine gentlemen, every one who had read of, or expressed a qualified opinion on the case, was dismissed, as being incompetent, while those who had neither read nor heard of the crime, although living in this city for more than a year after and next preceding the murder, were chosen. This

vicious custom of selecting jurors is equivalent to ignoring the most intelligent part of the community. The reason is plain. The average lawyer, in order to make his individual influence more fully felt, is ever desirous of selecting jurymen incapable of consecutive thought; for if intelligent, well-informed citizens were always selected for the panel, every case would be decided according to the law and the facts, thereby dispensing with the elements of an attorney's chief success. But the most vicious and vital point involved in jury trials is the custom of confining the panel in a seven-by-nine room for days and nights together, in order to force a verdict, often contrary to the better judgment of half its members. I am credibly informed that this condition existed in the jury which tried me for an offense that I never committed. The jury stood six for acquittal and six for conviction. This I understand, was its *status* for at least twenty-four hours next preceding its decision. Finally, seeing no hope of escape without bringing in a verdict, and being great sufferers financially on account of this delay, in sheer desperation they rendered the verdict which is now before your Honor. However harsh and unjust this decision of the jury may appear to me, let the sentence of the Court be pronounced; for, although the law is, in my conception, defective, in order that civil society may exist we must submit to its mandate until it shall have been changed more in accordance with justice and human reason. In conclusion, allow me to say, that I have faith in the justice of God and in my fellow-man, and that the time will come when I shall stand vindicated before this people."

When his mellow tones and deep pathos had died away, there were many tearful eyes in the assembly, and the Judge's voice trembled as he pronounced the following sentence:

"It is the order of this Court that the prisoner at the bar be taken to the Territorial Penitentiary as soon as prepared, and confined therein for the term of five years, from and after this date, at hard labor."

Up to the time of his sentence William Siddon had not written a line of the affair to Belle and her mother, for the reason that he was anxious to be cleared of the damaging charge before communicating the sad facts connected with the murder of his friend, and for a year thereafter he delayed writing. Finally, feeling and knowing his innocence of the charge, he entertained no doubt of his ability to clear up the suspicious circumstances to them; so conscious duty moved him to communicate all the facts connected with the case to the loved ones at home, including his then embarrassing position.

After a good deal of persuasion and much delay, he was finally furnished writing materials, when he sat down on his stool before the grated window, with a piece of board placed on his knees for a desk, and wrote the following letter:

"VIRGINIA CITY, September 26th, 1861.

"DEAR BELLE:—Since I last wrote you, a great calamity has befallen us. Two years ago, the 29th of last April, your brother Jesse was fatally stabbed in a public street of this city. He fell from my arms and died instantly, without speaking a word. I saw nothing of the murderer, who approached us from behind, stabbed Jesse in the back, and disappeared in the darkness before I had time to realize what had occurred. Thoughtlessly I withdrew the knife from the wound, and yelled "murder," and for help; several citizens ran to our relief, and with them a policeman; who, seeing me with the bloody knife in my hand, immediately accused me of the crime, and I was marched off to the lock-up where I have been detained ever since. A trial jury before the United States District Court has found me guilty, and I have been sentenced for a term of five years at hard labor in the Territorial Prison, which is nearly ready for occupation.

"I am sure this terrible recital will be a fearful blow to yourself and mother, but I feel that I cannot conscientiously do less than write you all the facts in the case. I hope you will not pass judgment on me until you know more of the case. If I cannot prove my innocence, if I am to go through life with your brother's blood on my hands, I wish never again to see sunlight. Whatever may be the result, I

feel that a time will come when the murder will out, and this foul suspicion be removed. May your Christian fortitude sustain you in this trying hour. God bless you, and farewell!

"Your wretched, but devoted,

"WILLIAM SIDDON."

CHAPTER IV.

A JEALOUS mind, once deeply poisoned
By the dirty fag ends of nothing,
Strung together by a vicious tongue,
Feeds delusion to its wounded heart,
Until the scaly, green-eyed monster
Sees deception in an angel's smile.

IN a previous chapter we left Fritz Barring busy with his plotting, saloon-keeping and political manipulating. So far, he had been eminently successful; had secured the election of his friends to office, and at their head Vernon Vinton. Although viewed with a degree of jealously and suspicion, Mrs. Vinton was, in the press of her husband's official duties, allowed, grudgingly, to accompany Mr. Barring to social entertainments and on excursions. Several little episodes observed by Mr. Vinton induced him to watch more closely the development of Barring's now evident purpose. Instead of going as a husband should have done, and given her warning of approaching danger, he heeded and drank in the insidious calumny of an envious, malignant woman who could not bear to see the attention and flatteries bestowed on Mrs. Vinton, while she was allowed to pass unnoticed and unheeded. Finally, realizing that influences were gathering about his wife which, if not checked, would ultimately lead to serious consequences, Vinton resolved on keeping house; with this view he rented a cosy cottage, neatly furnished, on the slope of the mountain overlooking the business part of the city. Hither the couple moved with their only child, a beautiful girl, two or three years old. Everything passed pleasantly for a time. Mr. Vinton left home regularly every morning (Sundays excepted) at nine o'clock, for the work of his office, from which he did not return until five P. M., while his wife occupied the greater portion of her time in the duties of the

household. In the afternoon of pleasant days she usually had a few lady callers, with an occasional visit from Mr. Barring, who always called simply to bring the "baby" some candy, nuts or toys. He had sagacity and knowledge of human nature sufficient to recognize a great truth, eternal and universal in its application, that the royal road to a mother's heart is reached through little attentions and kind considerations for her helpless offspring. Upon such occasions the visits of the saloon-keeper were short, nevertheless embarrassing to Augusta, who, half realizing his chief purpose, and knowing her husband's jealous disposition, felt relief on his departure. Mr. Vinton had several times observed Barring leaving his house, and, in consequence, had redoubled his vigilance. Coming home one afternoon, and finding the child with a bag containing a pound or more of candy, he inquired:

"Where did papa's duck get so much candy?" when she replied:

"Mister Bar dave it to me."

This little revelation of the child kindled Vinton's dormant jealousy into a flame, and turning his eyes in full on Augusta's face, in cold cutting words, he inquired:

"For what purpose is it that Barring is allowed to visit you from day to day, and always in my absence?"

Confused at this unexpected onslaught, Mrs. Vinton hesitated in her reply. This, of course, increased her husband's fury, and he demanded in more emphatic terms why she did not answer him. Nervously she did as follows:

"Mr. Vinton, pray compose yourself; I can assure you that there is nothing wrong in Mr. Barring's visits. You will remember it was only through your earnest solicitations that I could be induced to recognize and accompany him on several occasions. You had made your excuses, and pleaded inability to go with me anywhere; so that I have had either to stay at home or go with those I care less for; but you have chosen my escorts wherever I have gone, and often insisted upon my going, in order that Mr. Barring might be

favored with my company. For some time past I have been satisfied that his attentions were designing and his purpose sordid, and that they should be discontinued. You have previous to this reproved me for giving voice to such suspicions. But of late I have noticed that you were growing jealous of, yet at the same time insisting upon my receiving his attentions and presents. Since we settled in this house, he has been here several times, by your especial invitation. I have had no order from you to discourage or stop his calls. If it is your wish that I should do so now, advise me to that effect, and Mr. Barring has seen the inside of my door for the last time."

This candid, straight-forward speech somewhat reassured Mr. Vinton: nevertheless, he reared and tore around considerably, declaring that Augusta should hereafter avoid every attention of the saloon-keeper.

"Shall I forbid him the house?" she inquired.

"If you can do so without implicating me."

"Implicate you—what do you mean by that?"

"Well, you see," said Vinton, taming down considerably, "I am under so many obligations to Barring for past favors, with a hope of others to come, that I cannot afford to offend him. Should I do so, I am a ruined man, politically."

"Then, Mr. Vinton, I understand you desire me to treat Mr. Barring in such a way that he will discontinue his visits to our house, and at the same time take upon myself the whole responsibility of so doing, without giving any color to the treatment which will, in any way, let out a suspicion that you are concerned?"

"That's it, exactly, Augusta; not a downright refusal to see him, but use your woman's ways to get rid of an unwelcome visitor without telling him in so many words to leave."

The next day after the occurrence above narrated, Mr. Vinton was returning from his office after the usual day's service, when Mrs. Marlove, who lived at the foot of the hill, leaning on her front gate, accosted him with:

"Good evening, Mr. Vinton, how is Augusta to-day?"

"I presume she is well," replied Mr. Vinton, as he stopped before the gate; "she was this morning when I left the house."

"You appear not to see or think so much of your wife as somebody else does," replied Mrs. Marlove.

"Explain yourself," demanded Mr. Vinton, with evident irritation.

"Well, you see, I do not wish to make any trouble between man and wife; but you observe I live here just where I can see everybody who goes to your house. Now, if you will not be offended, I will tell you something. You know that I have been giving warning in this matter for over a year, and have told facts to which you have been blind all the time, and I further feel it my duty as a virtuous woman to tell what I have seen since you moved up on the hill—that is if you would like to hear it."

"Go on," said Vinton, all his old jealousies returning to plague him.

"Well, you see," commenced the little meddlesome woman, leaning her head over the gate, and speaking in a low confidential tone, "you see I spend a great deal of my time out here working in the garden. Besides, the north window of my sitting-room looks directly toward your house; so you see, wherever I am, I can't help but look that way—especially when the scenes observed are so interesting as of late. Of course you know that Fritz Barring is a constant visitor at your house in your absence."

"A constant visitor!" interrupted Mr. Vinton, growing pale and nervous.

"Well, no, perhaps I ought not to say that, but he is there two or three times every week."

"How long does he stay!"

"Well, I should judge, from one-half to two hours—more or less—sometimes I walk up to the house to observe, if I can, what is going on; but I can't tell much about it, for the curtains are generally drawn—especially in the bedrooms. Oh, it is really awful to think of a married woman letting

another man in her house while her husband is absent, or talking with him on the sly," she exclaimed, straightening up to her full height, her crimped red hair streaming in the wind, while her little snake-eyes looked archly over her hawk-bill nose. "I wouldn't think of such a thing—unless it was some particular friend or acquaintance, more especially if I had so good and indulgent a husband as she has. To-day I observed the most reprehensible exhibit which I have seen."

"To-day?" inquired Mr. Vinton, in astonishment, remembering his wife's promise the evening previous.

"Yes, to-day," continued Mrs. Marlove, "and that not much over an hour since. I saw Mr. Barring going up the hill to your place, and your wife, observing him from the window, came out to the gate. There they stood for some time talking. I saw both of their hands on the gate at the same time, and their heads were almost close enough together for a kiss. There, now, isn't that horrible? I hear Mr. Barring is going to San Francisco in a few days, and I, as a friend," said she, putting her face close up to Mr. Vinton's, "would advise you to look out for your lady-love, otherwise she may come up missing. At least," she continued, with a knowing wink, "look out for love letters during Mr. Barring's absence."

* * * * *

"Well, old lady, I have caught you at last," exclaimed Vernon Vinton, addressing his wife, excitedly, as he entered his house one evening, something over a week after his conversation at the gate with Mrs. Marlove.

"Here's a letter from your *lover*, which I was sufficiently fortunate to intercept at the post office this afternoon. It tells the whole of your faithlessness to me, and your attachment for a villain who has worn the garb of a friend."

"I do not understand you, Mr. Vinton," replied Augusta, with much feeling. "Please explain yourself."

"You don't, hey!" hissed he through his set teeth; "then read this letter and tell me what it means."

Augusta took the proffered letter with a trembling hand, and read as follows:

"SAN FRANCISCO, March 10th, 1862.

"MY DEAR MRS. VINTON:—Herewith I send the material and trinkets which you ordered, and in addition thereto a diamond ring, which I trust you will accept and wear as a small token of my esteem and deep attachment for one of the most accomplished and charming of women. Pardon my warmth in this matter, and I am sure you will, when I tell you that your praise runs like oil as it does from the lips of all who know you; for to know is to love spontaneously. I shall remain in the city some weeks, and hope to meet you when you come down.

"Yours truly and devotedly,

"FRITZ B——."

When she finished reading, Vinton seized the letter, with the remark:

"I shall preserve this letter as evidence in a divorce suit, which I propose to institute immediately."

"I can assure you, Mr. Vinton," replied Augusta, in great agitation, "that I have not given Mr. Barring any encouragement to write such a letter to me. 'Tis true I sent by him for some lace and other dress trimmings needed, which could not be obtained in Virginia City. He has abused my respect for him by sending me a present, accompanied by words of doubtful propriety."

"Doubtful propriety!" chimed in Vinton; "your language conveys the impression that if this letter had not been intercepted those words of *doubtful* propriety would have been all right."

"You do me injustice by your suspicious, angry words. I have done no wrong to you or any one else. If Mr. Barring has been so foolish as to write flattering compliments to a married woman, I should not be held responsible for them."

"O, no; certainly not," replied Vinton, in a sarcastic manner; "but how about Barring's hoping to meet you when you come down?"

"Well," she replied, with a choking sensation in her throat, "you know I have been for some time talking of paying my parents a visit. At our last meeting I spoke of this matter incidentally, which he has, it appears, embodied in his letter. There is nothing more than this in it, I can assure you."

"Woman!" yelled Vinton with his clenched fist raised over her head, "your story is altogether too thin for me to swallow. It is all a fabrication, designed to deceive and mislead me. Now, since you have gone so far in this matter; since you have outraged the common proprieties of a virtuous woman; since you, by your own indiscrect admission, propose to desert my bed and board and try your fortunes with Fritz Barring, go wherever the influence of the devil may take you, and never show your face to me again."

Augusta, realizing the fearful and embarrassing hallucination which had taken possession of her husband, pleaded with him to reconsider his determination to cast her off.

"You remember," she said, "how much you pretended to love me on and before the date of our marriage. Although but a child in years, I felt the deep responsibility I assumed in becoming your wife. With the little knowledge I had, coupled with a woman's intuition, I was enabled to perceive that it is the little words and acts of every-day life, cemented together with the breath of affection, that make up the sum of human happiness. So, from the first hour of our wedded life, up to this day, has this conception been the polar star of my existence. I have gone and come at your bidding, as does the faithful spaniel at it's master's call, without hesitancy or inquiry. Much against my judgment and desire did I brave alone the perilous heights of the frozen Sierras, all because you so willed it. Since here my study has been to serve you in all things. It has been by your command that I have accompanied this man Barring into society upon

several occasions, and never, only when you so willed it. His coming to the house has been with your knowledge, and I dared not order him off without your concurrence. This letter of his shows the audacity of the man, without in any way implicating me in any wrong act or intent. Considering all these things, will you, can you cast me off? Shall I go from you as a criminal, although in act and word as pure and spotless as the driven snow? Speak to me, Vernon! Cast aside this foul and foolish suspicion. Let us be to each other as we were once, when to live was to be in each other's presence. And, O! my child! What will become of her?" Falling on her knees before him, she continued, "I had rather suffer death than that shame should fall upon her little head. For her I am willing and ready to make any sacrifice. Command whatever you please and I will obey, rather than suffer the odium of a separation. Say but the word, and Mr. Barring shall never enter the house again. Neither will I speak to him, or look the way he goes. By all that is pure and holy, I beseech you to reconsider your resolution to drive me from your protecting care."

For a moment Vernon Vinton wavered in his purpose, but considering it weakness to yield to a woman's pleadings, he pushed her from him with the words: "No, woman; I am done with you. Go where you please, but never darken my door again."

With this he rushed out of the house and into the street, while Augusta fell fainting to the floor.

When Mrs. Vinton recovered from her swoon she found herself alone. For a time her mind was so mystified that she could not recall the incidents connected with her situation. By degrees it all came back to her like a horrible vision. The stars were shining brightly through the window. Not a sound could be heard about the house, save the low, steady breathing of her sleeping child in the adjoining room. At last, fully realizing her pitiable condition, she groaned in anguish of spirit. After several ineffectual attempts, she arose from the floor and groped her way through the dark to

the bed-room, where, after disrobing and donning her night-dress, she knelt by the crib of her little three-year-old girl, and gave expression from her over-burthened heart as follows:

"Great God! can it be that I, so lately loved and honored, am to-night a deserted outcast, bereft of peaceful home and husband? The tongue of envy tinged with slander, working on the shadows of a jealous mind, coupled with a little indiscretion on my part, have done the work. Knowing what I do to-night, could I but recall the flown months of the past year, the charm of those I love always with me would never have been broken.

"Thoughtless, heedless words and acts, even while the heart is pure and spotless as the drifting snows that winter upon the mountain's crest, tear asunder ties born only of patient care and watching. Father of all mercies, help me in this trying hour! Give me another hold on life, and courage to withstand the terrible thought of destruction which harbors in my mind. O my husband! O my child! the world is but a blank to me without us three united. Since this cannot be, since the silver cord is loosened and the golden bowl is broken, I will seek destruction, that oblivion may rest and assuage the void in my famished heart. Farewell, my little darling. May our heavenly father hold you in the hollow of his hand! May your little feet be guided in the ways of truth, and happiness cling about your life like sunbeams to the crowning hills at evening vespers. May no shadow heavier than those at twilight fall across your earthly pathway; and in their mellowing influence may your little heart be chastened and purified. Be to your father the light of consolation when I am gone; and may we meet again beyond the dark river, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

Thus saying, she kissed the child in its slumbers, arose, and after throwing a dark shawl about her shoulders, noiselessly passed out of the house, and with her slippered feet started up the rugged slope of Mount Davidson toward its

crowning summit, without hardly knowing or caring whither she was going. Onward and upward she went through sage-brush, over ledges and boulders, without looking either to the right or left. Finally, after a weary, toilsome, round-about journey she reached the summit of the mountain, exhausted and half dazed, without observing a dark, crouching, crawling figure which dogged her footsteps. For a time she leaned upon a ledge of rocks for support and gazed down on the living world several thousand feet below. The scene was marvelous in its tranquil grandeur. The crescent moon hung over the western horizon like a hunter's silver horn. Down, down at the base of the mountain's eastern slope could be seen the indistinct outlines of Virginia City, wrapped around its sleeping inhabitants. To the South and North the country lay dim, picturesque, and broken, where

> Hills rise o'er hills, that peeped by turn,
> To dive again beneath the midnight flood,
> While arching Heaven, fill'd with stars that burn,
> As if to light the weary soul to God.

After a brief pause, spent in contemplation and in prayer, Augusta passed over the summit of the mountain and down its precipitous northwestern declivity until she reached the brink of an ugly precipice.

"At last!" she exclaimed, "I knew I could find it, although it has been more than a year since I was here. Alas, for the frailties and vicissitudes of human life! Then my cup of common blessings was full. Now I am but an outcast, bent upon my own destruction. When the fickle pleasures of this world can no longer charm, and the soul feels weary of its pilgrimage, how vain and unavailing seemeth all things here below! Did I possess a thousand worlds like this I would willingly give them all for another drop of spiritual consolation for this trying hour. Father in Heaven! pardon this rash act. Constituted as I am, I cannot live under the ban of a foul suspicion, for which I have been spurned and made an outcast by him whom I did swear to love and honor. Forgive my many errors, as I for-

give those who have surely sinned against me and my honest intent. Bless my child and keep her from all harm. Farewell, beautiful world! Farewell, home and friends! These rugged, yawning caverns below will hide my frail form from mortal sight forever. Come death! come oblivion! I long for thy cold embrace."

She moved to the brink for the fearful leap, when a strong had firmly grasped her by the right arm, accompanied with the words "No, no, Señora, you shall not go."

Augusta was so much overcome at this unexpected interruption that she gave one piercing shriek and fell fainting on the ledge overlooking the gulf before her.

When Augusta recovered consciousness she found herself in a weird dismal cavern. The only light, a burning tallow dip, by which two human forms were made indistinctly visible at a little distance from the straw mat on which she lay. The cavern chamber was irregular, being from 25 to 30 feet in length and 12 to 16 feet in breadth. Through the visible darkness the dim outline of innumerable stalactites could be seen gleaming, pendant from the vaulted arch above.

Mrs. Vinton having taken in the situation, sat up on the pallet, when the two figures approached her, one of which she recognized in the person of Lo Loreno, the half Spanish, half Digger Indian, who had previously insulted her in the ball room, with his importunities, which presumptuous conduct had resulted in his being floored by Jesse Blanding, subsequently murdered, as related in a former chapter. All this passed before Mrs. Vinton's mind like a flash, and she shuddered to contemplate into whose hands she had fallen. The other figure was recognized as that of an old haggard, care-worn Digger Indian woman, dressed in a red blanket, whom Lo Loreno called "Madre."

"Where am I, and why am I here?" inquired Augusta; her voice echoing through the cavern as if some one had mocked her interrogative from every niche and corner thereof.

"Bonita Señora, tienda V. paciencie yo amo—me no harm you. La Vieja will live with you here. By-and-by you be my mujercita. How came you here? Encantador mujer, I tell you. You come out your casa while I pass along. You go up mountain, I come too, all the time a little way off. When you stand on top, I stand by one stone; when you go down I come. When you reach the bluff and go jump off, I take you by one arm; you fall down like dead, and I pick you up in my arms like one baby, and bring you here."

"O, why did you interfere with my purpose? Better a thousand times that I had made the fatal leap than to be thus. Hope and joy with me is at an end. Why then should I be tantalized with the continuance of a life which has already been drained to the dregs?"

"Bonita Señora," replied Loreno, growing eloquent over his prize; "Chispas like you are too nice for kill, so I saved you for myself, and soon you be my wife."

"Never!" exclaimed Augusta. "I had rather die a thousand deaths, or go to the end of the world."

"But you shall no go; you shall no die. You shall stay here. La Vieja will take care of you till you love me better than now."

So saying, he wrapped himself up in a blanket and laid down on a bunch of straw in a niche of the cavern for a rest, after his wearisome and exciting night's journey.

When Vernon Vinton returned home, near midnight, and found that his wife was missing, he was troubled and confused at her taking off. The child was yet quietly sleeping. Without disturbing it, Mr. Vinton took the lamp which he had lighted and searched every nook and corner of the house for the missing mother. In the bed-room he found the dress, skirts, and gaiters she had worn during the day. Her night-gown, which he knew she always tucked under her pillow every morning when dressed, was missing. Upon further investigation he found that the closet contained the remainder of her wardrobe complete, with the exception

of her evening slippers, a plush hat of her own trimming and a favorite cashmere shawl. So Mr. Vinton rightly concluded that his wife had not run off with another man, but had evidently left the house in her night clothes with a shawl and slippers. He then went out into the garden, and examined all the out-houses to see if he could find traces of the fugitive. After satisfying himself that she was not on the premises, he spent an hour or more in searching the alleys, by-ways and lanes of the neighborhood, but all in vain.

Returning home, he sat down on the bed by his sleeping child for a little sober reflection. "Can it be," he soliloquized, "that she has committed suicide?" Were his suspicions and treatment of her harsh and ill founded? Had his words really driven her to destruction? How could he explain her disappearance? Would not suspicions of foul play attach to him? What course had he better pursue? Should he alarm the town for a search? Thus he cogitated and weighed the matter in his own mind, until the dawning of a new day. Then realizing the necessity for prompt action, he wrapped a cloak about his little girl, and, taking her in his arms, left the house with the exclamation: "I'll go and see Warren, and get his counsel."

"Halloo!" said Warren Wasson, sticking his head out of an up-stairs window. "Who's ringing the door bell, with a baby in his arms, so early?"

The answer was: "Dress and come down, Warren, I am in trouble."

Warren opened the door a few moments later, with the exclamation:

"Vernon Vinton! What'n thunder has brought you out at so unseasonable an hour? I had just "cuddled" for my morning snooze."

Leading the way into a little sitting-room, where, pulling up the shade of an eastern window, the last light of the fading stars came in; then, turning to Vinton, he continued:

"What's the matter, Vinton? You look as if you had

just lost all your aunts, uncles and cousins, and on the way to the gallows yourself."

When Vinton had explained the situation, Warren jumped up, and after striding three or four times across the room, tugging at his whiskers, stopped before his friend with the exclamation:

"Vinton, you are a confounded fool! You have not sufficient sense to appreciate a true woman. In thought and action there is not a purer creature under the sun than Augusta. She is a jewel of the first water, and you have treated her like a paste diamond. Had she been other than a woman of soul and worth beyond your comprehension, she would long since have left the hymeneal meal-tub for other fields and pastures new. Instead of accompanying her where it was proper she should go, you have turned her over to the tender care of such vagabonds as Barring, and now, because somebody else paid her slight attentions, which you neglected or refused to give, you have let the green-eyed monster blind your vision to the charms of one of the best and most beautiful women in the world.

"He who has won a true woman's love,
And honored her in the winning,
Can ride life's tempestuous sea across
In the shadow of a nut-shell."

"Oh, hang your sentimentality and doggerel for beautiful woman," interrupted Vinton. "I came here for counsel, and not to hear your gush. What shall I do in this matter? Would it be better to alarm the town or make a quiet search?"

"Make a still hunt, my boy, and, if possible, keep the matter from the scandal-mongers, who would gnaw through an inch board to get at tainted meat, though the streets were full of fresh lamb chops and tenderloins. We can, if living, find the duck, possibly without exposing her midnight ramble. If she has gone to Hades, soul and body, why then the Coroner will be cheated out of his fee, unless he can get a larger one for make-believe. Leave your babe with Milly

and we will commence our search at once. The light rain of yesterday will aid us in our tracking."

With this understanding the friends started out on their tour of investigation, and were before the door of Vinton's house by the time it was sufficiently light for close inspection.

"Here's a slipper track to start with," said Wasson, "and it's leading up the hill."

"That's it," exclaimed Vinton, nervously. "It's about her measure, and she must have had on slippers, since hers are missing and her gaiters left."

Slowly and laboriously the track was followed on its way up the mountain. Sometimes it would be lost for fifty yards or more, and then discovered anew.

"Here's a huge brogan going in the same direction," exclaimed Wasson, some distance in advance of Vinton, "and its owner is evidently following the slipper, for here is the brogan effacing the little track."

Up the mountain side were the foot prints followed until the summit was finally reached. Owning to the dryness of the soil on the top, the shower appearing not to have reached so high, it seemed impossible to trace the tracks further, when "circling ever widening" was resorted to. Finally the trail was again discovered some distance down the northwestern slope, which was followed to the precipice, where there were numerous tracks of slipper and brogan, and evidences of a struggle. Here Mr. Vinton picked up a hair-pin, and a handkerchief which had his wife's name in the corner. These relics of his lost one gave encouragement and nervous interest to the chase.

From this point the slipper impression disappeared, while the descending brogan track, at every step appeared to sink deeper in the ground. Following the circuitous course of these footprints for something over half a mile, the friends found themselves immediately under the precipice on which they had picked up the hair-pin and hand

kerchief. They were in a deep ravine, with huge boulders on every side.

The track was finally lost in the rocky mass about them. Whither it had gone was a mystery. Nevertheless, they felt certain that the owner of the brogan could not be very far distant. After much hunting and inspection, however, they found what appeared to be the entrance to a subterranean cavern. There were faint evidences of foot-prints about its entrance. The opening was about three feet wide and four feet high.

After consultation, it was agreed that an effort should be made to explore the place. Half-bent, the friends entered the passage single file. Having advanced about ten feet, they met with an obstruction which seemed to completely block further progress. Feeling about in the visible darkness, they discovered the obstruction to be a stone, which could not be moved. A little niche or cavity was, after some delay, discovered cut in the right hand side of the obstruction. Wasson placed his fingers in it, and pressing hard to the left, the stone rolled away, when it was found that it moved in a groove cut for the purpose.

A dim light was observed at a little distance down the cavern. The noise of opening had evidently startled the inhabitants, for low voices could be heard within. Wasson, with his usual intrepidity, moved through the aperture, followed closely by Vinton. Then there came up a hoarse, rough voice:

"A hombre miras lo que haceis! Back or you die!"

At this moment Wasson had reached a point where he could stand upright, in full view of the inmates, a little below him.

"Is that you, Loreno?" inquired Wasson, addressing a man with a cocked pistol pointed within ten feet of his head.

"Yes, hombre, and this is my home, and you no come here or you die."

"But," continued Wasson, "you are secreting Mrs. Vinton here, and we have come after her."

"You can no haf her. She go jump, kill herself; I catch her, and safe her life, and bring her here; so she mine."

"But," persisted Wasson, "you have no legal right to keep her. Moreover, her husband is with me, and has come to take her home, and will blow your head off unless you give her up."

"No, no," replied Loreno contemptuously, "he no kill me; he too much one big coward. But I kill you both, you come one step further."

"Well, Loreno, will you not let us talk to Mrs. Vinton, to see whether she prefers going with us, or staying with you?"

"No, you no see her, you no talk with her; now you go, or I kill you."

Wasson, realizing the hazard of the situation, but being determined not to abandon Augusta to such a fate, his tact, he thought, would enable him to foil the purpose of the villain, so turned as if to leave the cavern, but in doing so he accidentally, on purpose, slipped and fell, rolling down the incline until he reached the cavern floor. He had scarcely recovered an upright position when a bullet sent from Loreno's pistol came whizzing through his bushy locks, just above the right ear, while the report went ringing and echoing through the vaulted archway. At this, Wasson sprang into a recess before Loreno could get another shot. Here he had but a moment to remain before his antagonist came bounding forward for a death struggle. The wit's expertness with a pistol saved him at this juncture, for observing the approach of his enemy, he was in a moment prepared for the worst. As Loreno rounded the sharp angle, behind which he stood, Wasson "let go," and the vaquero fell desperately wounded. Nevertheless, he continued to fire in the direction of his opponent until all the chambers of his revolver were empty; then, with groans and curses, toppling over from a sitting position he lay stretched at full length on the ground.

"Halloo, Vinton! where are you?" shouted Wasson.

"Here!" came back faintly from the entrance of the cavern.

"Come in and help me out with your wife, you renegade!"

After some delay, Vinton appeared, pale and agitated. His wife sat on the straw mat previously described, with her face in her hands. The old Digger-woman was sawing the air with her arms, and moaning pitifully over the fate of her wounded son. After much persuasion, much weeping, and many reproaches, Mrs. Vinton was induced to accompany Wasson and her husband back to Virginia City, which, after a slow and painful journey, they reached after nightfall, fatigued and exhausted.

The embarrassing circumstances attending Augusta's return home caused her to feel ill at ease, and more especially when Mr. Vinton's conduct was considered. He was cold and formal in her presence, which he avoided as much as possible. After a few days spent thus, the situation became unbearable, both to Augusta and to her husband. The gulf between them became so wide and deep that there appeared to be no means or disposition to bridge it over. "Augusta," exclaimed Vinton, the third morning after her return, "our union of heart and sympathy is severed forever. Go to your parents. If necessary, I will support you; but our living together any longer in this way is an impossibility. Here is sufficient money for the journey. The stage will call for you at 3 o'clock this afternoon."

"And my child," inquired Augusta, "what will become of her?"

"Do not trouble yourself about the girl. She shall be well cared for, and in due time sent to live with her grandparents."

At the appointed hour the stage halted at the door of Vinton's house. A trunk was placed in the capacious boot, and after earnestly entreating to see her baby before departing, which privilege was denied her, with a sad heart she entered the conveyance, which immediately rolled off westwardly, arriving about 6 o'clock in the evening of the same day at Carson, a city in a little round valley, eagle-named, nestling at the eastern base of the great Sierra Nevada Range, when a halt was made for the night.

"Have you a room for me?" inquired Augusta of the clerk of the Carson House, as he met her at the door.

"Well, not one that would suit a lady. But, then," continued the young man, thinking of the fee he would make in taking the stranger in, "there is one good, large room, which is occupied by a splendid young lady who had just arrived and engaged the room as the stage drove up. I am sure you would like her very much, for she appears to be as near an angel as any creature I ever saw. If not objectionable, we can accommodate you in this room, where there are two neat beds, good enough for Queen Victoria."

"Very well, sir," replied Augusta, "lead the way, and I will follow."

Here we will leave Mrs. Vinton for a time, until another and controlling character shall have been more intimately introduced.

CHAPTER V.

So uncertain are our poor little lives,
So mixed with sunshine and with shadows—
Oh! why should we in sighs and tears,
With minds finite and frail,
Attempt to turn their weight of years,
And lift the Future's veil?

FROM the time William Siddon and her brother left home for California, Belle Blanding and her mother lived quietly on the old homestead. The farming lands were leased out for money consideration sufficient to yield the mother and daughter respectable support, they retaining only the house, out-buildings, a cow, pony, barnyard fowls, a little orchard and a garden; hiring a little sixteen-year old boy from a neighboring farmer to do the chores and other work about the place.

Having graduated with honors at the village high-school, before the departure of her brother and lover, and her mother being feeble in health, Belle assumed the work and care of the household. Her time was divided between the duties of the kitchen, flower-garden, and the practice of instrumental and vocal music. Her garden possessed many rare shrubs and beautiful flowers, which were always neatly trimmed and carefully cultivated with her own hands. Especially was this the case with a flowering acacia which Siddon had brought her from the nursery on the morning of his departure, saying, as he presented it:

"This is emblematical of our love, Belle, for by nature it is everlasting; consequently, it never loses the perennial glory of its foliage:

"And when adverse winds and winter comes,
It blooms to cheer the bleakness of our homes."

When the War of the Rebellion broke out, Belle was thus situated and engaged. Soon the sound of martial music and the tramp of armed men were heard throughout the land;

> And the ominous brooding of calamity
> Filled the hearts of the weak and feeble
> With a dread like that which comes
> With the earthquake's rumbling sound.

During these troublous times, Mrs. Blanding and her daughter remained at home, taking no part in the stirring events which surrounded them. After learning their passive, defenseless situation, Confederate and Union soldiers alike passed the place without molesting the inmates or their little property. Finally there came to the house, one day, a squad of Union horsemen. The leader, a tall, heavy, dark complexioned man, whose uniform indicated the rank of a captain, approached the front door, and after banging heavily on it with his clenched fist, waited for an answer. Soon Belle made her appearance, dressed in home-made woolen checks, and having on a neat white apron fastened about the waist, armless, but coming up about the neck like a crescent, and trimmed with tatting.

"Good morning, Miss," said the captain. "Who lives here?"

"Mother and myself."

"No one else?"

"Only a colored boy, sixteen years old."

"Where's your men folks?"

"My father has been dead for many years, and my only brother is in California."

"And you and your mother live here alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you a Union woman, or a Rebel?"

"I am simply Belle Blanding, in love with my native State and our republican institutions."

"But which side of the controversy do you favor?"

"Being only two lone women, we are not prepared to take either side."

"Well," persisted the captain, with evident enjoyment, "in your opinion, which side is in the right and which in the wrong?"

"Since you appear determined to have an answer, I will say that I think both are right and both are wrong."

"Will you please explain how that can be?"

"Well," replied Belle thoughtfully, "the South is right in endeavoring to maintain the sovereignty of the States, and wrong to inaugurate open rebellion to accomplish that end; while the North is right in its endeavor to maintain the integrity of the Union, but wrong in making the war a pretext to rob the South of property rights. The fact is, the mass of our people, North and South, if brought face to face, would have no controversy. It is the extreme men of both sections who have involved the nation in this calamitous war."

The officer was wonderfully taken back at the girl's display of nerve and tact, and laughingly replied:

"Well, Miss Blanding, I very much admire the pith and point of your remarks, and shall not trouble you further on this score. We came with the intention of appropriating for the use of our army whatever of stock and provisions we could find on the ranch; but instead of capturing, I have been completely captured, and stand ready to defend you against insult or injury. We have had no breakfast this morning, and if you will furnish us a bite of something to eat we shall leave you and your household unmolested and with the kindest remembrances."

"Thanks," replied Belle, pleasantly; and bowing gracefully, continued: "We make it a point to feed the hungry, and never turn away the needy empty handed. Call your friends in and have them seated by the fire for half an hour and I will, by that time, have something prepared for you."

Being anxious to please her new friends so their influence might be used to prevent further embarrassment in the future by the "troopers," she skipped into the kitchen and rang violently a little bell out at the back window. At the

sound, Pompey, the colored boy, who was at the time currying the pony in the stable, dropped his brush and started for the house as if he had been shot out of a four-pounder. In a moment he stood before Belle, breathless, with his mouth open and his large black eyes shining like full moons.

"Vat's de matter, missus," he gasped, "am de Yankees come?"

"Yes, Pomp, the Yankees have come, and there are half a dozen of them now in the sitting-room."

"Golly! what will dey does wid us all?"

"They say," replied Belle, convulsed with laughter at Pompey's grotesque antics occasioned by fright, "that if we will get them some breakfast we shall not be harmed, so you go like the wind and catch three of the plumpest half-grown pullets in the hen-yard."

Before Pomp returned she had her cream biscuit kneaded and cut, ready for the oven. Having a fire and hot water left over from the morning's work, a steaming pan was ready for the chickens upon their arrival. Ten minutes was sufficient time to dress and have them ready for the fire. The salt and pepper were sprinkled over and mixed in with the disjointed fowls; then each piece was rolled in a mixture composed of equal parts of white flour and fine corn meal and dropped into the boiling skillet of lard prepared for their reception. A quart of neatly peeled and cut potatoes were, after salting, poured into a stew-pan of lard, similar in intensity of heat to that in which the chickens were placed. A large cup of finely ground coffee, mixed with the white of an egg, was emptied into a woolen sack, knit for the purpose. This, with its contents, was placed into a two-quart coffee pot, the top of the sack turned over the rim of the pot. Thus prepared it was set on the stove immediately over the fire, and the hottest of water poured over it. All these things in conjunction with the preparation of several side dishes, were placed on the stove in such a way that they were all done and ready at the same minute for the table, which had been set at odd moments.

"Well," said the captain, rising and looking at his watch impatiently, "the girl's half hour is up within half a minute, and no breakfast yet. Well," he continued, soliloquizingly, "I suppose she is just like the rest of them, fair, sweet and full of promises."

"Gentlemen," said Belle, with a pleasant smile, opening the door at the very moment the officer ceased speaking, and looking as if she had just come out of a band-box, "will you please come into breakfast?"

At this the captain in confusion, blushed to the ears, and his companions laughed outright at his dilemma. When seated at the table the men observed the get-up of the meal closely, looking at each other and then at Belle, who was pouring out the steaming, claret-colored coffee. Everything was in perfect order; the snowy table cloth and napkins, the nicely polished knives, forks and spoons; the cups and glasses appeared to have been rubbed until glossy; the coffee pot and plated cream pitcher were as bright as new dollars.

"Well, Miss Blanding," observed the captain after a period of silent admiration for the perfection of her work, "you must have a corps of excellent cooks to get up such a splendid meal as this in so short a time."

When informed that she had no assistance other than the little darkie's in wringing the chicken's necks, the men were loud in their praise of such proficient work in a space of time so brief. Upon taking their leave, the captain extended his hand to Belle, and in the most kindly manner assured her of his deep respect and admiration for the talent, tact and skill which she had displayed, and declared if he thought that she was only a fair sample of the women of Kentucky, he would go home and leave the fighting of such rebels to those who had less heart than he.

Soon after the occurrence of the incidents as above narrated, the colored boy, who had been sent to the post office, placed a letter in Belle's hands. It bore the stamp, "Virginia City, Nev." It had been a long time since she had received a letter from her brother or lover, and knowing

from the handwriting and postmark that this was from one of them she skipped joyfully from the kitchen, where, with her sleeves tucked up to her elbows, she had been engaged "doing up" the morning work, to the sitting room, where her invalid mother reclined in a well-cushioned arm-chair, basking in the morning sunlight, and enjoying the lovely sight of Belle's little flower garden.

"Oh, mother," exclaimed the girl, as she entered, "I have a letter from Will and Jesse. It is the first we have received for more than a year, and I am so happy over it."

"Well, my child," replied her mother, rousing up from her weary, languid position, "you had better read it before your joy becomes unbounded, for it may be that its contents will turn your joy to wailing."

At this, Belle stood up by the window light, and, after breaking the seal, commenced reading the letter, written by William Siddon, more than a year after receiving his sentence, (given in full in a previous chapter of this story), in which was detailed the circumstances of Jesse Blanding's murder, and the arrest and conviction of her lover for the crime.

Belle had read but a few lines to her mother when she faltered, and her words became inaudible; nevertheless, her eyes continued to follow the lines, while she leaned more heavily against the casement for support. Her face grew to ashy paleness. Her limbs trembled in every joint, and when she had finished reading, she staggered like one stunned and blinded by a fearful blow, and, turning, almost fell into a chair with a moan of anguish so deep and heart-rending, that her mother, forgetful of her own weak condition, sprang to the assistance of Belle, with the exclamation:

"My child, for God's sake tell me what's the matter? Give me the letter, that I may know the worst!"

"No, no, no!" said Belle, realizing the situation, and forgetting her own anguish, in the absorbing thought for her parent. "No, mother, you must not read it. The intelligence it conveys will kill you."

"Give me the letter this minute, for the suspense is worse than death!" continued Mrs. Blanding, at the same time reaching with nervous energy for the document, which Belle held firmly in her right hand, all crumpled up.

The girl was struck with her mother's wild appearance, and, being apprehensive of the consequences of this fearful strain upon her already weakened mind and nervous system, concluded that it was possibly better to let all the facts be known, rather than endeavor to suppress them. So she reluctantly handed her mother the letter, and, helping the old lady back to her seat, fell on her knees, resting her head on her hands in her mother's lap, and sobbed aloud, while Mrs. Blanding read. When she had finished, the letter fell from her hands, and she sank back in her chair, with a wild, piercing shriek, which brought Belle to her feet. She thought her mother had fainted, and immediately dispatched Pompey, on the pony, after a physician, and to call in some neighbors.

In the meantime, Belle busied herself in the use of every restorative within her reach, but all to no purpose; and, before anyone arrived, she realized that her mother was dead.

The news of Mrs. Blanding's death, with intimations of the cause, went through the neighborhood as if on the wings of the wind, and it appeared that all the people of the county had turned out to the funeral. The greatest sympathy was felt and expressed for Belle, in her triple bereavement, for she stood before the eyes and hearts of her neighbors as

One unequalled in all things lovely,
Whom to surpass no one could ever hope;
So gentle and so cheerful was she always,
That her kind words were ever falling
Upon the ears of those who sorrowed,
Like dew-drops on poor withered roses.
Youth and age uncovered as she passed,
And children left their games and newest toys
To take her hand, and follow where she led.
But when nerve and courage claimed support,
The adamantine hills were not more firm.

Friends appeared to vie with each other in kind attentions to the living and the dead; and when her dear, good mother was laid away in the little church-yard, under the willow, by the side of her husband whose spirit had for many years been sojourning in "that undiscovered country," a dozen homes were offered Belle by as many well-to-do neighbors; but she declined them all, saying that she would be better contented to remain on the dear homestead, if one or more of her old school-mates would stay with her. This was readily assented to when it was found that the girl's determination to adhere to the home of her youth could not be changed. It soon got noised about that Miss Blanding was preparing to take a trip to California and Nevada. Squire Drake, one of the most influential men of that section, and an old friend of the Blanding family, paid Miss Belle a visit, in order to dissuade her from this "rash and perilous undertaking," as he was pleased to term it. Miss Blanding listened quietly and attentively to the advice of her father's most confidential associate during the latter years of his life. The old gentleman, after more than an hour spent in discussing the subject from every conceivable point of view, closed his argument as follows:

"My child, you should consider well the step you are contemplating before it is too late. For you to leave home, friends, and all that is dear to you, and travel to a new and strange country in search of a wanderer, who is at present a prisoner for slaying your only brother, is incomprehensible to all who know you."

"Judge Drake," replied Belle, with as much composure as she could command, "do you believe William Siddon killed my brother?"

"Well," said the Judge, taking his spectacles and wiping them, "that is a leading question, as the lawyers would say, and I am not prepared to answer directly; but the presumption is that he is the guilty person, for the facts in the case, as developed at the preliminary trial, were sufficient, it appears, to secure a true bill against him, and subse-

quently final conviction. Remember, that we simply have his story of the affair, and it is natural that every one should put the best face on a matter implicating the narrator in high crimes and misdemeanors."

"But," persisted Belle, "where was the incentive for such a heartless act?"

"That I cannot tell," replied the Judge; "had we all the facts in the case, we might discover a motive, for the darkest passions and most heinous crimes among men are developed in just such wild, new countries as Nevada Territory."

"But, Judge Drake, you knew William Siddon intimately from his childhood, up to the date of his departure for California; and in all those years did you ever see or hear of him committing a wrong act?"

"No," replied the man of the law, with a degree of enthusiasm, "Siddon's name stood absolutely above reproach, and I always pointed to him as a model young man."

"Then should we, at the first intimation of wrong doing, abandon our dearest friends in time of need, and folding our cloaks of sanctity about us, walk coldly away from loving hearts, thanking the Lord that we are so much better than those deemed our equals only a few days earlier? Friendship and love are but fictions, if the heart ceases to feel concern in those dearest to us, upon the wafting of the first foul breath of suspicion. True friendships are sweet, because, like pearls of great price, they are rare, and difficult in the obtaining. Will Siddon has ever been a friend to me, and of late years more, and I will never desert him, for I am sure that he is innocent of the crime with which he is charged."

"Well, well," said the Judge, rising and extending Belle his hand, "I see your mind is made up. You are a brave little woman, and may Heaven bless and prosper you in all your undertakings!"

A few weeks later Belle had sold her little stock, with the exception of the pony, which she gave to Pompey for a keepsake, and, after making arrangements with her tenant

for the occupancy of the house and preservation of its contents, she bid all her old friends an affectionate good-bye, and departed by way of Louisville and Chicago for New York; thence by steamer via Panama for San Francisco, where she arrived in safety, with but few mishaps, always receiving the kindest attentions from passengers and officers. From San Francisco she went up the river to Sacramento; thence by stage to Carson City.

CHAPTER VI.

WHILE talking, her cheeks were dimpled,
And two regular rows of ivory
Gleamed between her smiling lips
Like pearl-drops set in coral.

AT the close of a previous chapter, it was recorded that Mrs. Vinton, upon reaching Carson City, on her way to her father's, after having been expelled by her husband, was informed by the clerk of the inn, that there was not one vacant room in the house, but that she could lodge with a lady stranger just arrived; to which she assented, and, upon reaching the appointed room, pleasantly situated on the second floor, the two ladies were introduced.

"Miss Blanding," said the clerk, "this is Mrs. Vinton, of Virginia City, who, owing to a crowded house, we ask the privilege that she occupy for the night one of the beds in your room."

"With pleasure," exclaimed Miss Blanding, extending her hand to Augusta, and leading her to a comfortable arm-chair situated in a nook near one of the windows. Belle Blanding stood before Mrs. Vinton for a moment, as if in deep thought. In this brief period Augusta surveyed her room-mate from head to foot, and the more she looked the more she wondered, until a spell like that of fascination possessed her. A being more beautiful she had never beheld. Her height was about five feet six inches, while her form was so well proportioned and symmetrical in its make-up that the brush of a painter must have been moved as if by inspiration. She was neatly robed in a close-fitting dark alpaca traveling dress, with just enough of gimp and lace about the throat and collar to make one feel that neat-

ness and good taste were characteristic of the creature. Her complexion was that of rose and lily, mixed with orange blossoms. Her chin was well rounded. Her mouth was small and straight, lips fairly full, with a degree of self-possession and firmness which sat about them, in composure. Her nose was of the Grecian type. Here eyes were large and light brown, with an expression so full and deep that, while looking in them, one felt as if sounding the depths of a fathomless ocean. Their lashes were long and silken. Her eyebrows were well defined and inclined to arch. Her forehead, full, round and high, while over all a rich profusion of golden curls hung about the shapely head and fell loosely nearly to her waist. Thus she stood, "a thing of beauty and a joy forever." Nevertheless, when at rest, her features bore an expression of sadness almost painful to behold.

"Your name seems familiar to me Mrs. Vinton," observed Belle, after the pause above indicated. "I certainly have heard it before. Let me see," she exclaimed, pressing the fingers of her right hand to her forehead, "is this Mrs. Vernon Vinton of Virginia City?"

"The same," said Augusta, rising and putting her hand on the stranger's arm. "And this is Belle Blanding, the sister of Jesse and the betrothed of William Siddon."

"It is," replied the girl, with great agitation, at the same time opening her arms and clasping Augusta to her heart. For fully ten minutes there was not another word spoken, but they stood locked in each other's arms, like old friends weeping over a common sorrow. The cold, suspicious treatment which Mrs. Vinton had for weeks received at the hands of her husband, without having any sympathizing friend to whom she could confide her troubles, had almost frozen her affections; but when this sorrow-stricken girl fell on her neck, sobbing like a child, the frost of neglect melted from her heart, causing tears to flow from her eyes like dew drops falling from morning roses. Finally they gained their equilibrium, and stood facing each other inquiringly.

"William wrote to me about you," commenced Belle, "stating how kind you had been to him in his confinement and troubles, and I am so happy to meet you and have an opportunity to express my deep sense of gratitude for the sympathetic words and consolation afforded in his hour of trial, when all others appeared to have forsaken him."

"I felt a lively interest in his welfare," replied Augusta, "because I knew that I was in a measure responsible for his misfortunes, and a suspicion has haunted me ever since, that the blow he struck Lo Loreno for his discourteous conduct to me at a party some weeks previous to Jesse's untimely taking off, had something to do with the murder."

"Then," exclaimed Belle, taking Augusta by the arm and looking her straight in the eyes, "you do not believe that William Siddon killed my brother?"

"No," replied Mrs. Vinton, "I do *not* believe it. In fact, it would be more difficult for me to believe that the sun would never shine again."

"God bless you for those words, Augusta. They have made me supremely happy. From my very soul I knew it was so. Nevertheless, I heard that all the people of this community believed him guilty, and for his good name I would go to the end of the world."

When further told that few people in Virginia City believed Siddon to be guilty of the crime for which he had been imprisoned, Belle was nearly hysterical with joy, laughing and crying by turns.

During the evening, Augusta told Belle her sad story of family troubles, and that she had been compelled by Vinton to return to her parents, whither she was then going, probably never to return to Virginia City. Before the time arrived for Mrs. Vinton's departure, next morning, she and Belle were fast friends, and each deeply interested in the welfare of the other.

After bidding Mrs. Vinton a pleasant and affectionate "good bye," at the door of the Hotel, Belle Blanding busied herself in finding out all she could, without exciting curi-

osity, about the "Warm Springs Prison," as it was called. She learned that it was kept by one Abram Curry, who had formerly run the place as a summer resort for the upper-tendom of the Territory. The Territorial Legislature being in great need of a "lock-up," and a secure and profitable place for prison labor, purchased the site and improvements from Curry, and put him in charge of the prison as its warden, on the 1st of January, 1862. After this it was a common saying when a fellow was sent up for some crime, that he had "gone to the Warm Springs to board." Learning that the location of the prison was less than a mile and a half distant, Belle determined to go alone on foot, in search of her lover. It proved to be only a pleasant morning walk, so Miss Blanding reached the site without fatigue. She found the improvements to consist of a two-story stone building roughly finished, with much of the mortar between the stones loose and falling out. Inside, the building had been lined with cloth and papered, with cloth ceilings, most of which was worn, seared or torn. A shaky shingle roof covered the structure. Its windows were low and narrow, with wide deep sills. In addition to this structure, there were several other less pretentious ones—a kitchen attached to the main building, store-rooms, etc. At the time of which we write a number of tanks and cells were being built for the confinement of prisoners, and around the whole a stone wall was in course of construction, the material being quarried on the grounds, of which there was an inexhaustible supply. Belle, dressed in a plain black alpaca suit, and having on a felt hat, deeply veiled, applied for admission.

"Who do you wish to see?" inquired the turnkey.

"William Siddon," replied Miss Blanding.

The officer of the day scratched his head a moment, as if in doubt. "O, you mean the fellow who was put in here a few months ago for killing Jesse Blanding up at Vriginia City over two years since?"

"Yes," replied Belle bitterly, "the same whom you have imprisoned here for a crime which he never committed."

"Then you don't think him guilty?"

"No; I do not believe he ever committed a wrong act in his life."

"Very well, madam," replied the keeper lazily. "I suppose you are entitled to your opinion in this matter. Please come this way."

Belle followed through the grounds and up the hill side where a number of convicts were engaged in quarrying stone.

"Stop here," said the officer, addressing Belle, "and I will bring the young man down to this shed, where you can have a few words with him; but you must cut it short, for we don't allow much of that kind of thing around here."

He then went up into the quarry and brought Siddon down to the point where the girl stood. His dress was the inevitable stripes of the convict, nevertheless it looked neat and tidy. He appeared to have no intimation or conception of whom he had met until Belle raised her thick veil and looked straight into his eyes. His astonishment and confusion were great. Upon recognizing the one of all others he most desired to see, he could only utter the words, "Miss Blanding!" and, taking her proffered hand, received the warm, convulsive kiss which Belle implanted on his lips. But his reserve of manner was so manifest that Belle felt pained beyond expression and chided him for it, and anxiously inquired the cause. In reply, he said, in a hollow husky voice:

"Miss Blanding, I am not the William Siddon whom you knew in your childhood days. I am not the William Siddon to whom you, three years ago, betrothed your faith and your love. Then I was a free man and counted no one my superior. I had strength, heart and hope. Feeling that I had the nerve, wit and courage to carve out a home and fortune, I sought your love and hand, and won them. Alas, how changed is my condition to-day! A combination of circumstances over which I appear to have had no control have deprived me of my liberty, broken my spirit and robbed me of everything worth living for."

"Be not despondent, Will. Don't say that you have nothing to live for. You have much. You have more to live for than at any previous time. To-day your fair name is under a cloud, but it is as pure and free from tarnish as is God's sunlight. You have been convicted of a crime which you never committed; and you must live—you shall live—to see the villain who committed the horrible deed brought to the bar of Justice. Moreover, you have me to live for. You pledged to me your faith, your love. Have you forgotten those vows so quickly? My dear mother has gone to her long home, killed by the cruel blow which has falsely imprisoned you. My mother dead, I felt that my next duty was to seek out your abiding place and soothe and sustain you in your trying ordeal, not doubting for a moment that the gloom and despondency of this hour will pass away, as the darkness of night is dispelled by the coming day."

"Then," said Siddon, taking Belle's hand in his, "you do not believe me guilty of the crime for which I am charged?"

"Oh, Will!" exclaimed the girl in great anguish; "why will you hang to that horrible thought? Believe *you* guilty of slaying my brother, the best friend he ever had! I believe you had nothing to do with his untimely taking off. Heaven forbid! I could sooner believe the world a lie, and that all the works of God are false, for to believe it would be to crush out of my heart and mind every particle of faith in humanity, and in the utility of its creation."

Before she had ceased to speak, Siddon had the girl pressed to his bosom, whilst the scalding tears which for two or more years had been hidden in his heart, traced each other in quick succession down his manly cheeks. A new light broke over his soul. Here was the dearest creature in the world, who had left home and friends for his sake, determined to share whatever the future had in store for him, clinging to him with a faith that dampened and withered every selfish consideration. The turnkey, who had been a silent spectator of this scene, evidently struck with the rare intelligence and beauty of Miss Blanding, and thinking that

it was too bad to have such a dear creature throw away her affections on a convict, seized Belle around the waist, with his hands over her bosom, in an indelicate manner, exclaiming as he drew her away from Siddon:

"See here, my duck, I have heard enough of this nonsense; come with me, and leave this vagabond to his stone-cutting."

Belle wrenched herself from his grasp. At the same time William Siddon, being deeply offended at the fellow's insulting words and acts, and for a moment forgetting the position he occupied, struck the trusty a blow in the mouth which sent him sprawling to the earth. Seeing the fracas, several subordinate officers rushed up, seized, handcuffed and started with Siddon to the "tank," whither Belle followed, pleading for her lover, and endeavoring to palliate his offence, but to no purpose. He was roughly pushed into a new cell, and, after being chained to a staple in the floor, the door was locked on him. "There you will stay, old fellow," said the jailer, "for thirty days, and live on bread and water, and not much of that."

Belle begged for the privilege of seeing her lover again, and with much concern inquired when she might be permitted to do so. Being rudely and coldly informed that she had conversed with him for the last time for months, perhaps for years, the poor girl wended her way back to the hotel in great distress and vexation of spirit.

"Conversed with him for the last time for months, perhaps for years!" soliloquised Miss Blanding to herself, while pacing her room.

The words of the prison lackey, quoted above, as well as those uttered upon closing the door on Siddon, "There you will stay old fellow, for thirty days, and live on bread and water, and not much of that," rang continually in her ears. The cold, revengeful tone in which these words were pronounced weighed like lead upon her heart.

"Then they propose not only to keep him chained to a rock in a damp, dark, unfurnished cell, but to starve him into

the bargain, simply because he had sufficient spirit to resent an insult offered me. This is certainly a cruel fate to one so noble and worthy, and I would be unworthy of his name or love, should I sit down, fold my hands, and like a sick child weep my eyes out because I can't have my own sweet will. There are times for weeping, and there are times when the eyes should be dry, and there are times of great emergency when the heart should lose its softness, and desperation turn every nerve to iron. If there were no emergencies, no great incentives to move us to action, the world of mankind, like an ocean without a tide, would stagnant grow, and all our lives would run in little circles. The difference between the great and small is but an opportunity, backed by the will to do and dare. Can I not rescue Will Siddon from the cruel treatment of the jailer? I will try. I can but fail, and to fail in the attempt will be a matter of consolation to me in knowing that I used my utmost exertions for his liberation; and, moreover, whether he may or may not approve of my action, he will, nevertheless, love me, by discovering my zeal in his behalf. 'Tis true, I am but a woman, and a sense of delicacy should induce me to act discreetly; but to my mind it would be less womanly for me to pine away my days here, and at the same time allow the only one I love in all the world to languish in a felon's cell, as punishment for a crime which he never committed."

It was late that night before Belle Blanding sought her pillow; but when she did, her mind was fully made up. After a somewhat restless sleep, she arose with the sun, and commenced preparations for her arduous undertaking. An old, dark stuff dress was altered into a half bloomer costume, in order that she should be less encumbered in her movements. During the day she went deeply veiled to a hardware store and procured a hammer, a cold chisel and a dark lantern. Thus her preparations went quietly on for a desperate night's work. After partaking of a hearty supper at six, Belle repaired to her room. The Bloomer costume was donned with a dark, knit bodice over it; a pair of stout calf-

skin shoes and a dark plush hat composed the rest of her external outfit. By nine o'clock she was ready for the tramp. Throwing a large, well-worn shawl over her shoulders in such a way as to completely envelop her form, and gathering up her tools, she passed noiselessly out of the house, gaining the street by a side gate. There being no moon, and the sky overcast with clouds, the night was quite dark. In order to avoid observation, Belle selected the least frequented streets until she was clear of the town, and well on the road leading to the Prison, which she reached about 11 o'clock, after a leisurely, cautious walk. On her previous visit there, she had examined closely its situation and arrangement. At a point near the old shed where Will Siddon struck the jailer, she observed a long, light ladder lying on the ground. Since the conception of the plan her mind had often reverted to the location of this ladder as the only means by which the consummation of her wish could be made possible. Between the ladder and the outside world were the half-finished prison walls, the lowest point of which was fully six feet high. The westerly front of her lover's cell was on a line with this new structure. Feeling sure that she could not operate inside of the wall without being discovered by the guard, she resolved to secure the ladder and raise it on the outside. How to do this presented a difficult problem. After rambling around for some time in search of an accessible point, she tumbled over a fence-rail. "Good," she murmured, "I have it now." Taking up the rail and laying one end on the wall, the other on the ground, she stepping on it, deliberately walked up to the top. Here she remained reclining for half an hour, listening for sounds and peering through the darkness in order to see the form of the guard, whom she could hear passing within twenty feet of her about every five minutes.

Being fully convinced of the situation, and immediately after the guard had passed on one of his rounds, Belle slipped down on the inside of the wall and quietly moved to the shed previously mentioned, the dim outlines of which

she could barely discover. Near this she found the ladder without much difficulty. Lifting it easily, she hurried back to the wall, and resting one end of it, she was soon on top. Pulling it after her, she placed it against the wall on the opposite side. Not a moment too soon was this feat accomplished, for the guard had returned, and, stopping, listened intently, as if he had heard an unusual sound. But after some moments, passed on, apparently reassured, and Belle was allowed unmolested to accomplish her purpose. She took the ladder in her arms and placed it against the exterior wall of Will Siddon's cell, and inch by inch raised it until the upper end struck the roof boards, some twelve or fifteen feet from the ground. Then, with her lantern and working tools, she cautiously ascended it. As incidentally observed on her previous visit, the roof of the cell had not been put on, but the rafters were in position, and rough boards, designed for sheeting, lay loosely around over them. Belle noiselessly moved two or three of these boards aside sufficiently to admit her body and scaling apparatus. At this moment the prison clock rang out the hour of midnight upon the still, gloomy air. The watchmen called the time in their dull, sing-song way. For a moment Belle's heart failed her, and she nervously clutched the top of the wall for support. Finally recovering her self-possession, she peered down into the depths of the cell, but no object could be seen. Upon close attention, there appeared to issue the sound of deep breathing.

"That's Will," she murmured; "he sleeps. I will be careful not to awake him."

So saying, she stepped out upon the rough boards, and, taking hold of the ladder, gently drew it up until the end of it stood on top of the wall, then started it down inside, between two rafters. Inch by inch, she let it drop so noiselessly that no sound was audible. Finally the lower end of the ladder rested on the cell floor beneath. After adjusting it securely, she started down the rounds as noiselessly as the ladder itself had gone. Upon reaching the

bottom, the girl turned her dark lantern in order to discover the contents of the cell. It was barren of furniture, without ventilation or other light than that furnished by two small, gloomy, grated windows six or seven feet high. The floor, neatly constructed of huge square stones was laid in cement. In one corner of the cell appeared the form of a man prone on a straw mat, covered with a single pair of blankets; manacles were around the right wrist and ankle; these were fastened to a connecting chain, and a chain extending from this was securely locked to an iron ring made fast in the floor. At the sight of this desolation and dreary solitude the heart of the heroine sank within her, and she leaned heavily against the ladder to avoid falling.

When she had in a measure regained her composure and became somewhat familiar with the desolation of the place she moved cautiously toward the pallet, with her lamp so turned as to give light sufficient to see her way without allowing its rays to disturb the sleeper. Reaching the bed, and setting her lamp off to the right, she knelt on the straw mattress by the side of her lover and gazed intently upon the dim outlines of his features. Soon his lips moved, and murmuring sounds issued therefrom. Bowing her head to catch the words, she heard:

"So, Mr. Jailer, you say she has conversed with me the last time for months, perhaps for years? To die that she might live supremely happy, would make me content. Only for her, my life would be blank and cheerless as that of a shipwrecked mariner upon a stormy sea. But I cannot, will not, lose my hope of good to come, while she still loves and hopes. Could I but feel her warm breath on my cheek, and listen to her dear, encouraging words once more, it would be to me the bliss of Paradise. My sweet love, will they not let me see you once again?"

While he spoke these words, his arms were extended as if to grasp the being on whom his dreaming imagination ran. Belle, overcome and weeping at the sleeper's words, pressed her face between his arms and implanted a kiss on his pale

brow, murmuring in mellow, deep tones. "Dearest Will, be content! I am with you, to part no more."

Will Siddon opened his eyes wonderingly, and exclaimed as he clasped the girl to his bosom.

"My life, my soul! My darling Belle, is this you, in truth? Where are we, and how came we here? Do we still live, or are we over the dark river that borders the Promised Land?"

"We still live," she replied, "and we are in this cruel dungeon, together and alone."

By this time Siddon had fully returned from the shadowy realm of Dreamland. Sitting up and looking wildly about, he began to realize the situation.

"And this is really you, Belle?" he murmured, at the same time feeling over her face and head with his left hand, his right being manacled.

"Indeed it is, dear Will; and I have come to liberate you," said she, holding between his eyes, and the dim lamp, her hammer, chisel and file.

"But how in the world did you get here?" he inquired, in utter amazement.

When informed of the methods she had used, and how she had scaled the prison walls and slipped in between the guard's rounds, and secured the ladder, and by its assistance had entered, Siddon was lost in wonder at the nerve and daring of the girl, and, putting his arm around her waist, said tenderly:

"Of all the women in the world, Belle, I do not think you have an equal in true faith and firmness. I had rather be here as I am, in chains, having the consciousness of your love, than, without it, to be free and in possession of all the kingdoms of the earth."

"I fully appreciate your loving words, Will; but this is no time nor place for sentiment. We have but a short time to work before the prison-keepers will be astir, and I must take you with me when I go."

So saying, she put the chain that connected the handcuffs on an iron bolt in the floor, and adjusted the lamp so as to

concentrate its light on her work; then, taking up her chisel and placing it on the chain, she gave it a heavy blow with the hammer. The dismal echo was so loud and hollow that it startled Belle, and the hammer and chisel dropped from her hands.

"Hold!" said Siddon. "My dear, that will never do. The noise will soon bring the guard upon us. Besides, could you thus release me from confinement, it would be almost impossible for us to escape the clutches of the law officers. I would be surely captured and returned to prison, with an additional term given to me for jail-breaking. Moreover, the very fact of my endeavoring to escape would imply guilt of the crime of which I am charged. I cannot afford to do this, Belle; for I love you too well to cast another shadow over your life by an act which would be construed and used to ruin all our future prospects."

"How good and wise you are, Will! I now see that it is better to await hopefully the termination of the law's cruel sentence rather than defy it, and run the risk of greater ills. But," she continued, as she placed her arms about her lover's neck, "I hope you will forgive me for coming here in the way I have. Oh, Will, it was prompted solely by my affection for you."

Siddon kissed away the girl's flowing tears and assured her that the adventure which she had made in his behalf was one which would always be the sweetest remembrance of his life.

"The only concern I have about the matter now is that you may be as successful in returning from as you have been in reaching this place. If you should succeed in that," said he, "I shall consider it one of the most wonderful and daring feats ever performed by a heroic woman. I will even write a book about it, and in the work endeavor to pen a tithe of the admiration in which I hold you, but which in words I can never hope to express."

"There now," said she, playfully placing her hand over his mouth; "that's flattery enough for one night. I have

done nothing more than the average of women would have done, similarly situated. The generality of men have an idea that we are weak and hysterical in times of great emergency; but there never was a greater mistake. Courage is not always that which can brave the whirlwinds of the ocean, or the solid shot from the belching cannon. It is the determination to do and dare where conscious duty leads that makes the truly brave. It requires great moral courage and God-ordained valor to sustain the silent watcher by the couch of a loved one, or that of the stranger, where fell disease and pestilence revel in their might, and baffle human skill. There are a million Florence Nightingales in our own land, who, if opportunity offered, would reap never-fading laurels as bright as hers; who waded through the blood and carnage of the battle-field whenever the fight raged fiercest, heedless of shot and blazing shell, and on her knees held to dying lips her little cup of water, and, with Christian fortitude, poured sweet words of consolation into the ears of thousands who languished in pestilential prisons."

"Beautifully and truly said, my darling; and I would not detract a hair's weight from the statement you have made; for, to deny the strength of character and nobility of woman's nature, would be to deny your own existence, and"———

At this moment the tolling of the watch bell indicated three o'clock, A. M. As the sound died away, Belle arose to her feet.

"My own, I must leave you now, for I cannot afford to be apprehended in this place nor seen on the road to Carson; neither can you afford to accompany me at this time. But I shall return again, and we will then consult what further is best to do."

"No, Belle," said Siddon earnestly; "you must not repeat this night's work, for, although it has made me supremely happy, its repetition would be hazardous to us both, without the possibility of accomplishing any good. So go, my

darling. Live near me, if you can; and may God shield and protect you until the shackles shall fall from my limbs."

"Do not be alarmed at my repeating this adventure. When I come again, which will be soon, it will be by way of the door of your cell. Now, good night! Keep up your courage, Will, and we shall all be happy yet, for there is nothing that chastens the spirit so well as deep tribulation."

So saying, she imprinted a kiss on his lips, then gathering up her tools and lantern, was soon on the top of the building. Drawing up the ladder, she let it down on the outside, and replacing the boards which she had moved upon entering, descended, reaching the ground in safety. Wishing to remove every trace of her night's work, she took the ladder from the wall, and, carrying it some distance, laid it down in an out-of-the-way place, and then started at a brisk step for Carson City, where she arrived unobserved, just as the first indications of the coming day appeared in the east.

After reaching her room, she, for the first time, seriously felt the nervous and physical exhaustion which the excitement and labors of the night had entailed. She sought her couch, and was for several days confined to the house. The anxiety for her lover added much to the continuance of her indisposition. In her preparations for the trip from Kentucky to California and Nevada, she had not fully realized the distance and expense of the journey, consequently discovered that the contents of her purse were growing very light. In fact, after paying her board-bill and for some little contingencies, she found that there would be only a few dollars left. In this condition of things she considered what was best for her to do. She paced her room by the hour, pondering over her dilemma. She could teach music or school, but where was the opportunity? The country being so new and so few families in the town there appeared little chance in this direction. She would willingly cook or wash, for that matter, if a decent place could be found; but the country was full of rough men prospecting for gold and silver, and living in tents and huts, consequently, but few cooks were

required, except those employed at the hotels and restaurants. These employés were all men, and most of them Chinamen at that. So her womanly modesty and refinement of feeling made her shrink from contact with this class. While debating in her mind what to do, she had occasion to visit the hotel sitting-room, where she picked up the Carson *Appeal* of March 20th, 1862. After looking over the paper for some time, she discovered a notice in the local column which attracted her attention. It read as follows:

"WANTED—A first-class cook, competent to take charge of the kitchen at the Warm Springs Prison; wages $100 per month. Apply to Abram Curry, on the grounds."

After reading the advertisement over two or three times and getting the consent of the landlady, she appropriated the paper, and with it returned to her room with a new light in her heart.

"Yes," said she, soliloquizing, "I will go and apply for the place. I am sure that I can fill it. The wages offered are good. Besides, I shall be near Will, and perhaps I may work my way sufficiently into the good graces of the employés to enable me to see him sometimes. But, then, having been to the prison, the officers will recognize me, and that would be embarrassing. I will have to disguise and make a Betty of myself. At school I used to be considered a great mimic. This faculty which I then cultivated for the diversion of my playmates may now be turned to solid account. I saw a horrid red wig this morning in a down-town shop. That, with the use of some cosmetics which I have, will make a first-class Biddy of me, sure."

Veiling herself deeply, she went out and purchased the coveted wig and some little things in order that she might make herself unrecognizable. Getting everything in readiness for departure, she went down to an earlier breakfast than usual, after which she went into the hotel office, and, while settling her bill, chanced to hear a young man speaking to another about returning to Virginia City. Said he:

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"I just come over here yesterday to bring some quartz specimens for assaying, and am going to start back at ten o'clock with my empty express wagon, and would like, if possible, to get some passengers or freight to help pay the expenses of the trip."

Miss Blanding thinking this a good opportunity, stepped up, and, addressing the man, said, with one of her sweetest smiles:

"Sir, if not unpleasant, I would like to go with you, accompanied by my trunk. What will be the charge to Virginia City?"

"Well," said he, "the usual rate is five dollars; but," he continued, looking the girl over from head to foot, "as it's you I won't be particular about a few dollars.

"Thanks," she replied, "for your good will. I shall be ready at ten o'clock, if that will suit."

"All right, madam, I will be at the front door with my wagon."

Belle then returned to her room and commenced her toilet. She donned an old green striped calico dress, with a knit woolen sacque over it of the same color. She then endeavored to adjust the wig over her well braided and closely-coiled hair, but to no purpose, for it made the wig set out so far over the back of her head that the "make-believe" was altogether too manifest. She did her hair up in every conceivable way; but finally despairing, deliberately let down her golden braids and shaking them out over her shoulders, they streamed down her back and below the waist like a rich mass of new-reeled silk. By a motion of the head, she swung it about her face and arms, and lovingly caressing it, said:

"My beauty, you must go. Circumstances over which I have no control appear to demand it. What would Will say to such a beheading? It always seemed such a pleasure to him when permitted to run his fingers through your gauzy fringes; but now your time has come, and here you go."

So saying, she seized a pair of scissors that lay on the bureau, and with a convulsive cut, as if fearing resolution

would fail before accomplishing her purpose, severed one-third of the mass. This she followed up until cut within two inches of the scalp. Gathering up the crop, adjusting it carefully and tying with a blue ribbon she laid it away in her trunk.

"There, my beauty," she exclaimed, "rest until more propitious days shall come."

The wig now fitted neatly, and looked as if it had "growed" there. Taking two or three different pigments she painted her face and neck in such a manner as to absolutely lose every trace of her former self, and at the same time transforming her into one of the most complete types of a Bridget from Killarney. In fact, the artistic manner of shading in cosmetics, as applied, appeared to change the regularity of her features, thicken up her lips and gave her brilliant eyes a dull, languid appearance.

"That will do," she exclaimed, looking in the glass and throwing down the brush. "I am sure I could walk the streets by the week without anybody suspecting that my face was 'all put on.' Even my landlady would not recognize a trace of her 'golden-haired boarder,' as she has been pleased to call me."

Putting on her hat and shawl and a double veil, she rang for a servant and had her trunk taken down to the front door, whither she followed, just as the Virginia City man drove his wagon up in front. In a few moments she was on the seat with the driver, and waving her hand to her hostess as a last adieu, the conveyance rolled rapidly away. The couple had not proceeded far when Belle said:

"I have a friend over at the prison, and I very much desire to see him before going further. If you will be so kind as to drive by I shall be under many obligations to you. It is only a little ways over there, and the detention will not be long, and it may be that I shall go no further to-day."

"Certainly, madam; I am entirely at your service. We can delay two or three hours, and then reach Virginia City

before nightfall; and even if it is later I don't mind being caught out in the dark with such a companion. If you wish to stay at the prison all night I will wait over a day, or two if necessary, for your accommodation."

"Thanks, for your kind offer," replied Belle. "But if I conclude to stop at all I shall likely be detained some weeks. In that case, you will be at liberty to proceed within an hour, and receive your pay all the same as if I should accompany you the whole way."

"All right, but I had rather take you all the way for nothing, than have you stop at the prison and give me five dollars."

Miss Blanding felt that she had been extremely fortunate in running across this expressman, for now, if she stopped at the prison, no one in Carson City would know of her whereabouts; and as this man, a stranger, was going on to Virginia City, 15 or 20 miles distant, there would be no one sufficiently acquainted with the facts to reveal her identity.

Upon arriving at the prison, Miss Blanding, by the assistance of her companion, alighted, and bidding him wait, presented herself at the Warden's office.

"Is Misther Curry in?" inquired Belle, in a full, round brogue, bowing to an elderly gentleman, sitting at a desk.

"That's my name," said he, removing his spectacles. "Be seated, madam. What can I do for you?"

"Well, if you plase, sir, I have come to inquire about the place I saw advertised in the papers."

"Do you mean the notice for a cook?"

"The same, sir."

"Do you seek the place for yourself?"

"If it is agrayable, sir."

"Do you think you could fill the place?"

"I do, indade."

"Were you ever in a State Prison?"

"And shure, sir, do you take me for a thief? I am an honest girl, sir, sakin' an honest livin'."

"Oh!" replied Curry, laughing. "I did not mean to imply a suspicion that you had been imprisoned for crime; but had you any experience in prison life?"

"Faith, and how could I have any experience in prison-life without having been a prisoner?"

"That is very easy. I, myself, have never been a prisoner, nevertheless, know all about the condition and status of prisons."

"Well," replied Belle, reflectively, "I know nothing of such matthers from actual exparience, but think I have an ideya of what a prison should be."

"Then give us your idea of what a prison should be."

"Plase, sir, it would be the height of folly for me to spake my poor sintiments on this subject in the presence of one so exparienced in such matthers as yourself."

"Well," said Curry, good naturedly, "I would like to have your opinion; for, by it, I think I can, in a measure, judge of your qualifications to direct and manage a prison kitchen."

"Well, with your lave, I will say this: That a prison is a place where bad people are confined that they may be reformed, and the community protected from their further depredations."

"I thought," replied Curry, "that convicts were sent to prison that they might be punished for their crimes."

"I know that is the prevailing opinion, but it always appeared to me wrong. It is said that the good Lord made us all out of the same pile of dirt. If he did, the wather he used in mixin' the morthar varied materially in quantity and quality. Some of it was hard, some soft, and some of it was evidently dirty. Every fellow was cut by a different pathern, and every head was made in a different mould, of different size and shape. Some of us were kiln-dried, some baked in the sun, and some were so unevenly dried that they were full of soft and hard spots; some have been, durin' their whole lives, under and surrounded by gineral and refining influences, while others of betther natural parts have been allowed to run to weeds and waste, like untilled corn-fields

planted in rich bottom land. So, sir, you see we are just what we are, and every one like no one else. Then to dhraw a moral line that every one must toe whin half the world can't see it, and say that all are lost to grace and hope and love who have offended the letther of the law, is harsh and cruel. Some poor souls are always errin', and thin sorely grieved because they did it. If all were angels, angels would have no work to do in the moral world. The good and great among us were designed by their Maker to move among the sorrow stricken and sinning, like lantherns to guide the feet of the weary, wayward, foot-sore travelers in their lonely journey through life."

"Then your sympathy for the erring thief and murderer is such that you would turn all the poor fellows out of this place with your blessing, wouldn't you?" inquired Curry, with a contemptuous smile.

"No, indade, sir. I would not. It is necessary for the protection of society that these criminals should be confined; but next to the protection of the community, the chief object of such institutions as this should be the airnest endeavor, by example and kindness, to bring about a reformation in the lives of its inmates. They have hearts as well as we, and their betther natures can be reached by kind considheration."

"Certainly, madam, you talk well, theoretically, for a serving woman. I should judge that you had seen better days."

"I have," replied Belle, humbly, "but circumstances beyont my control have brought me to this, and I must make the best of my present surroundings."

"What can you cook?"

"Anything and everything needful."

"How long have you followed the trade?"

"For many years."

"In what capacity?"

"As housekeeper and cook for an aged lady."

"Such work is very different from that which has to be done here. Up to a few days ago we had a Spanish greaser

for a chief cook, with his wife as an assistant, and a Chinaman for a helper. The chief left very unceremoniously, day before yesterday, for parts unknown, taking with him all his valuable effects, but leaving his wife behind, who, poor creature, is nearly heart-broken about his deserting her. The kitchen is, in consequence, a perfect pandemonium of dirt and disorder. If you are willing to try the job of cleaning up the house and cooking for forty men, with the aid of the slim help I have already named, why, we shall be pleased to give you the job."

"Is the dinin'-room in charge of the cook?"

"Yes, certainly."

"And the stores?"

"No; we have a steward who has charge of the storerooms."

"I will thry the place. If I should not give you satisfaction you kin notify me of the fact and I will go.

"Very well; what is your name?"

"I call meself Betty Maloney, sir."

"Where is your baggage?"

"In the wagon, just beyont, with the expressman."

"Have him bring it in."

Belle pulled down her veil and went out where the man had been waiting for more than half an hour for her return.

"I am sorry," said she, "to have detained you so long. I have concluded to stay for a time, so if you will lift out my trunk, I shall be under obligations to you."

"I am sorry, Miss, that you have concluded to stop here. If at any time you wish to visit Virginia City, please send a note to Green Williams, and I will come over, and the trip shan't cost you a cent."

"Thanks," said Belle; "I appreciate your good will. Here is the money which it was agreed you should have for taking me to Virginia City."

"O, never mind, Miss, that's all right. I don't charge you a cent. Good-bye!" he continued, extending his hand to Belle, which she shook heartily."

CHAPTER VII.

So cold and selfish is this world of ours—
So small the seed of charity given,
That when, perchance, it grows and flowers,
It savors less of earth than Heaven.

BELLE was taken by Mr. Curry to the kitchen, and introduced to Lena Castro, the deserted wife, a thick-set, dark-complexioned, rather good-looking, semi-Spanish woman, some thirty years of age. "Sing," the Chinaman helper, was also introduced to "Betty Maloney," the chief cook of the establishment. From the queer leer of the Chinaman, and the stolid, pouting look of the Spanish woman, Belle felt that her homely, make-believe, Irish face had not made a favorable impression on the help, which determined her to win recognition and favor by merit.

Upon entering upon her duties as first cook, Belle Blanding found the measure of dirt and disorder fully up to Curry's representation of it. Before she had been in position an hour, she began to realize the herculean task assumed. To add embarrassment to disorder, she found, upon directing her assistants to do any particular thing, that they either disregarded her order entirely, or went about it in such an indifferent, slovenly way, that, before the job was completed, Belle had done the greater portion of it herself. To go to Curry and complain of the disobedience of her help, would likely forfeit her the place, or at least seriously cross those with whom she must be associated. In this dilemma, tact and talent came to her relief, she determined on a course of action wherein grows never-failing fruit. Belle had studied the Spanish language while at school sufficiently to be of great service to her in conversing with Lena, who appeared much rejoiced to learn there was some one present capable of understanding her defective tongue. By degrees she

appeared irresistibly drawn to "Betty," whose voice seemed ver soft and her words sympathising. The story of the poor woman's desertion by her faithless husband was confided to the new cook on the second day after her admission, together with the simple narration of the prominent events in her past life, in which there was much of sorrow and hardship.

Belle soon found that Lena possessed many good traits of character, which had been suppressed and almost smothered by want of appreciation in those with whom she had been associated. It is proverbial of the Spanish race that their friendships and their enmities are the deepest and most enduring. For those they love, who are true to them, they will endure privation, ignominy, and even face death without a murmur; while, for those they hate, is always kept a cup of gall and wormwood, ever filled to overflowing. Lena was no exception to this rule, and when she found in Belle one who seriously sympathized with her sorrows, and offered consolation in kind words and womanly attentions, the attachment grew from day to day, until it appeared as if Lena's greatest joy was found in doing Belle's bidding.

With the Chinaman she had more difficulty. He maintained his stolid indifference to her mandates, and went about his work in the same greasy, slovenly way inculcated by his late Spanish "boss." One day, something like a week after Belle entered the institution, the steward came into the kitchen with a "blacksnake," ranting and charging because the Chinaman had neglected to make up his bed and sweep out his room. His obscenity and profanity shocked Belle's sensibilities to such an extent that the hot blood appeared to boil out through the paint on her cheeks, and just as the ruffian raised his whip, as he had often done before, to strike the cowering Celestial, Belle stepped between them, with the remark:

"Hold a moment, Mr. Mooney. The Chinaman is not to blame. If any one is at fault, it is meself, sure; for I have kept the crather so busily at work trying to clane up this place, that he had no time for anything else."

"What, woman! Do you mane to stand between me duty and meself?"

"An' is it your duty to bate people?"

"Yis, when they nade it; and thin a haythen Chinee isn't paple, for he has no soul, and has a baste for a mother, and falls down to a wooden Josh, and he ates rats and mice for a living."

"Whether or not the Chinaman has a soul, it is not for the likes of yez to judge, any more than it is for the Chinaman to judge of us, sure; and the mere fact of his falling down before a wooden god proves nothing in itself. It is only the image of his ideal. The god of Confucius was "Supreme Intelligence," and all the Mongolian generations since his day have followed the teachings of their illustrious patron saint. The value of a belief is measured by its moral influences, and its tendency to elevate poor human nature. Although you believe in the Saviour and the saints, the disgusting language which you have used here places your moral level, in my estimation, below that of the haythen Chinee. We cannot judge of the grandeur or worth of a man by the length of his stature or the color of his skin. God made the human frame as a receptacle of a living soul; but, like nuts with a beautiful exterior, upon examination, many are found to be defective, and some are utterly empty or filled with rottenness. So, if you would not be taken for a haythen, don't spake haythenish. If you would make people believe you have a soul, show it sometimes in your words and actions."

"Then, Betty Maloney, you take the part of a haythen against one of yer own race, do yez?"

"I take the part of right and justice in whatever form it may appear. The king who would abuse a dog is not worthy to be a king; and the Irishman who will abuse a Chinaman, simply because he is a Chinaman, is unworthy of the Green Isle and the blessin' of St. Patrick."

"Well, Betty Maloney, your tongue is sharper than a meadow sickle, and whin I endeavor to get over its railings,

it rakes me sides worser than a barbed wire-fince. So I'll lave yez with yer blessed haythen."

"The top of the morning to yez, and farewell."

As soon as the steward had left the room, the Chinaman came up to Belle, with tears streaming down his cheeks, and taking hold of her hand, said:

"You belly good wolum. You heap shabbee. Him stewlard one belly bad man. Me bin one belly bad Chinaman, too—muchee no good woluk. You tellee me what do, me woluk allee same you my bludder."

After this little episode, Belle had no further trouble in the kitchen. Lena and Sing appeared to vie with each other endeavoring to relieve their mutual friend of all drudgery. She did all the work over the range, but, under her direction, everything was prepared to her hand. The laundry Chinaman had, up to this time, been complaining at Belle's demand for more clean linen; but, when informed by the kitchen waiter how "Betty" had taken his part and prevented the steward from beating him, their grumbling was at an end, and her orders were considered almost sacred. The kitchen gradually assumed neatness in appearance, system and order. With the aid of the prison carpenter a place was prepared for everything, and everything put in its place. New whitewash was applied to the black rough board walls and dingy cloth ceilings of the kitchen and dining-room; the old rusty range scraped, scoured and polished until it smiled every time a happy face looked into its capacious sides. The copper kettles and tinware hung from hooks, or sat around on papered shelves, each viewing itself through its shining neighbor. Knives, forks and spoons, which had never felt the influence of bath-brick, appeared astonished to behold once more the color of the metal out of which they were made, and old greasy dish rags were transformed into nice clean washing towels; the streaked and grease ridden table oilcloth clean for the first time since its introduction into the dining-room. The floors were scoured; the dilapidated chairs mended and oiled by the carpenter, at Belle's suggestion.

At the beginning of these changes for the better the officers and men winked at, or nudged each other, saying:

"A new broom sweeps clean; but the old gal has undertaken a work too heavy for any one woman to carry through."

As every day added some new and attractive feature to either the dining-room or kitchen, all beholders began to feel that the first Prison Reform had really set in. While the raw material was stale and poor, the art and taste of Belle's preparation made the coarsest dish seem delicious. The effect upon the prisoners was marvelous. The rough jests and jeers which greeted Belle on her first appearance gradually disappeared from the vocabulary of prisoners and officers. They began to wash their faces and hands, comb their hair and brush their clothes before coming to their meals. Decorum grew continually and perceptibly upon the whole institution.

Belle never laughed; her heart was too sore for that. But when she spoke, which was seldom, unless in connection with her duties, there was a deep, low, tremulous richness about her voice which, somehow, made her auditors feel that there was a superior soul within the apparently rough exterior. Her dress was always simple, but neat and faultless. Even Abram Curry declared that she was the most wonderful creature in tact, talent and discipline he had ever known.

One day, at a leisure hour, Belle and Lena went out into the adjoining woods and gathered great apronfulls of ferns and flowers. By dinner time they had the flowers made up into bouquets and placed on the tables, and the ferns tacked up against the walls of the dining-room. Everybody was delighted. The officers and prisoners realized that it was a compliment to them, and secretly and audibly blessed the hands that had brought into their lonely home, from the outer world, the crowning glory of God's great work—the finishing touches

"In finishing the great panorama of Nature."

Curry declared that he was so charmed with the display that a garden should be laid out in the grounds and planted and cultivated under Betty's directions.

By acts of kindness and attention to the sick, close attention to her duties, with a disposition ever manifest to make the place comfortable and cheerful, Belle grew continually in favor with the inmates of the prison.

News came into the kitchen one day that a young man had an arm broken by the premature explosion of a quarry blast, and that some warm water and bandages were wanted. Belle prepared the cloth, and, taking it, a pan, some towels and a tea-kettle of boiling water, went with the guide to the ward in which the injured man was confined. After washing and examining the broken limb in Belle's presence, the doctor declared that the bone above the elbow was so badly fractured that it would have to be amputated.

"With careful setting and nursing, don't you think it might be saved?" suggested Belle.

"Yes, woman," replied the doctor, impatiently, "it might possibly be saved, as you suggest; but I have neither time nor patience to fool away half a day on this case, and, moreover, there is no one here to give him the proper care and nursing of which you speak."

"I will agree to give all the necessary care and attintion, if you will place him in a condition for nursing."

"You!" exclaimed the physican, with surprise; "your place is in the kitchen; you were not hired for a ward nurse."

"Sure and I know that, docthor, and I will neglect no duty in the kitchen; but the State would not be the loser should I choose to work airlier and later, and slape less hours, in ordher to save this poor boy's arm. He has been imprisoned for a trivial offinse, and his sintence will expire in six months; and thin, what will he do for a livin', with only one arm and the reputation of a convict?"

"Pshaw, woman! you are too tender-hearted for such a place as this. You will have to get used to this kind of work if you stay here. When I was a surgeon in the Mexican war I used to slash off the arms and legs of the wounded with as little concern as you would chop off a chicken's legs."

With this brave speech the great surgeon pulled off his coat, and, getting his tools in position, rolled up his sleeves preparatory to commencing the job.

"Docthor," exclaimed Belle, earnestly, "have you a boy?"

"Yes," said the doctor, staring wonderingly at the girl, "about the age of this one, just turning into his seventeenth year. But why do you ask that question?"

"If this boy was yours, instid of the poor outcast that he is, would you cut his arm off?"

At this the Doctor dropped his knife, and, after some hesitancy and stammering, said:

"No, not until every other source was exhausted. But then this renegade should not be named in the same breath with my boy; for he is a fine, manly fellow, in every way worthy of his father, while this one is a felon, and consequently should receive but little consideration, for his life is hardly worth preserving."

"Docthor," persisted Belle, "how does your boy's head compare with this one?"

"In every way its superior—round, full, with every organ properly developed—while this fellow has more the head of an animal than that of a man. See its width between the ears; that denotes destructiveness and a combative disposition, while his low, receding forehead and narrowness of the front section denote small intellect, with almost a total absence of reverence and moral perception."

"Docthor," inquired Belle, looking him straight in the eyes, "is the boy to blame for the make-up of his organization?"

"Well," replied the man of physic, in confusion; "well now, I can't say that he is. The origin of some of his mental defects probably runs back through three or four generations; but, then, the precepts and education of his youth and the terror of the law should have been sufficient incentives to have kept him out of this place."

"But then, Docthor, most likely his education and airly trainin' were as vicious and defective as his natural disposition. Then, what?"

"Then, God help him!" ejaculated the doctor, with much warmth.

"Had we not betther do what we can for him, and leave the rest to the Lord? Is it not our duty to do as much? We must take the world as we find it, Docthor—good, bad and indifferent, altogether. Is not his lot sufficiently miserable, without your heapin' on him another great calamity, which the amputation of his arm will certainly entail? His life, although lowly, is as dear to him as yours is to you, and his limbs doubly so; for it is only through physical labor that he can ever hope to airn an honest livin', while *you* and *your boy* have minds cultivated to such an extint that you can live honorably, and sumptuously even, without your hands. Circumstances uncontrollable or beyond your reach have made the difference between this boy and yerself. If the tables had been turned in your organizations and education, and it was yerself with a broken arm and a convict's chain, and this boy stood over you with a docthor's diploma and a bloody knife, would yez not think it hard should he cut it off because it would make him some throuble to save it?"

"Well, Betty, I am confounded and astonished at your arguments. They are unanswerable. You talk more like a philosopher than a servant girl, and, coupled with your Christian fortitude and disposition to aid and assist the lonely and unfortunate, have taught me a lesson of humanity which I will not soon forget. I now see clearly the drift of your conceptions of human nature; you believe it is within the province of the strong to help the weak, morally and physically; and instead of the hatred and prejudice engendered by ignorance of the constitutional make-up of man, coupled with the influences of early youth and education, that the good and great of the race were designed by their Creator to so shed their light and influence that, like the genial rays of the sun, life and hope and joy and progress

may grow out of vicious, distorted natures. With this view inculcated, the vengeance of the law is gone, and, instead thereof, a system established which would have solely for its purpose, in dealing with criminals, first, the protection of society from their depredations; and secondly, to reform the culprit. I will save the boy's arm for yours and humanity's sake."

"May the blessin' of the holy Saints fall upon you, docthor, for your kind consideration. I am sure the boy has a mother who will bless you always, for this evidence that the bond of sympathy between the erring and higher order of the race is not broken. Your dissertation on the subject of criminals has expressed my views much more clearly and forcibly than I could have done it meself, and I have higher hopes than ever that the prejudices and hatreds so often harbored in our hearts will be modified, and finally dispelled upon a better knowledge of ourselves and the influences which guide and control our thoughts and actions."

The boy's arm was nicely and tenderly set by the doctor and through the attention and good offices of Belle he rapidly improved and finally gained complete use of it. This and other kindred acts of kindness and care for those sick or in distress gave her the name of the "Good Samaritan."

One morning, a few days after the occurrence above related, Mr. Curry entered the kitchen, where Belle was found "siding up" the place, before commencing preparations for the noon meal.

"Betty," commenced Curry, "we have another bad case that needs your immediate attention."

"And what is it, Mr. Curry?" inquired Belle, turning from her work with a bright copper stew-pan in her hand, and facing the portly Warden.

"It is the case of a young man who is very low with typhoid fever, and, if some careful nursing is not obtained, he cannot live three days."

Faith an' I'm always ready to help a poor crather; where will I find him, Mr. Curry?"

"In the new stone cell to the right on the way to the quarry. It has not yet been roofed in."

At this Belle dropped her kettle, and, with a low moan of anguish, leaned on a side-table for support.

"What is the matter, woman?" inquired Curry, in evident alarm at her appearance. "Are you sick?"

"Yes," gasped Belle; "give me a chair and some water."

After being seated, Lena gave her the water, tenderly and with much concern; for she had learned to love Belle better than all the rest of the world.

With a great effort she recovered her self-possession.

"Excuse me for this exhibition of wakeness, Mr. Curry; for, sure, me heart is so tinder for those sick and in distress, that I feel all gone like when I hear of a new case. And where is the kay to the cell, Mr. Curry?"

"Here it is," said he, taking it from his pocket and handing it to her. "I will hold you responsible should the prisoner make his escape while the key is in your possession."

"And do you think a man with a low faver is likely to run away in that condition?"

"But, then, he may get better."

"Well, I hope he will," replied Belle, with great earnestness. "If so, I will be held for his safe-keepin'."

At the earliest practicable moment Belle took Lena with her, and repaired to the cell indicated by Curry. She knew from the first that it was the one in which William Siddon was confined, about which she had lingered at leisure moments, and in the early twilight, endeavored to catch the sound of his voice, which she had sometimes heard by passing the door, accidently as it were, when being furnished his scanty allowance of food. But she had never seen his face in the two months in which she had been chief cook; neither had he seen hers, although he had often heard the guard speak of "Betty Maloney the cook" as being a wonderful creature; how she had remodeled the whole appearance of the kitchen and dining-room, which, coupled with her neat and excellent cooking, had transformed the whole institution

from one of misery, squalor and dirt, into a comfortable, home-like place wherein the prisoners and officers all felt a refining influence at work in everything which she did. Sometimes when she was called "Betty Maloney," the shrewder and more observing officers and men shook their heads, with the remark, "That is all make-believe. She is an angel dressed and painted up in the guise of an Irish woman. Her brogue is so broken and void of continuity, that the deception is apparent."

In this condition of things, Belle with her trusty assistant reached the cell, and, turning the key in its rusty wards, opened the door and stepped cautiously in. After becoming a little accustomed to the gloomy apartment, the form of a man was observed in the same corner of the room in which Belle had found her lover on the memorable night she had scaled its walls. Advancing to the pallet, she found Will Siddon so emaciated in form and face as to be hardly recognizable; moreover, he was delirious and insensible to everything about him. Kneeling on the pallet, Belle imprinted kisses on his burning cheeks. From the little knowledge she had of typhoid fever, she felt fully convinced that the case was a desperate one, and that no time could be lost in wailing and repining. She had the physician sent for, and, in the meantime, sought Curry's presence, to whom she stated her convictions as to the case.

"Now, Mr. Curry," said Belle, "there is no question in my mind but what the patient will die if not removed from that damp, cold den of a cell. We must have a dry, airy room for him. Where can we find such a one?"

After a moment's reflection the Warden replied:

"There is no such place to be had—oh, yes, there is! Pat Mooney's, the steward who was discharged from the prison employ last week on account of his overbearing nature and disposition to meddle with the affairs of the kitchen. Since being sent off, the stores have been entirely under your control, and so shall his room be. It is the one with the dormer window, adjoining the chapel, facing the court."

"Thanks, Mr. Curry, for your kindness, and may the blissed saints ever be with you!"

When she returned to the prison cell, the doctor being present, shook his head at Belle's inquiries relative to the state of the case.

"He will certainly die if he is not removed from this place."

When informed by the girl that she had prevailed on Mr. Curry to allow the patient to be removed to a nice, sunny, well-ventilated room adjoining the chapel, the doctor expressed surprise and gratification at her success. By means of an improvised ambulance, with the aid of four "trusties," Siddon was quickly removed to his new quarters. For more than a week after his removal the patient hung to life as by a thread, which the slightest change for the worse would certainly sever. In consequence of the evident interest and anxiety which Belle took in the case, and having the kindest regard for her, the doctor redoubled his efforts to save the young man's life, and was always to be found by the bedside when his official duties in other quarters would permit. As for Belle, she moved about like a charmed presence, and appeared to be always there. No duty connected with her culinary department was neglected or slighted. Her firm, silent, rapid action impressed all coming within her influence that a superior being moved among them, consequently every one was disposed to do her bidding without hesitancy or comment. The tender caress which she had observed Belle give to Will Siddon, upon her first entrance to the sick cell, and the scalding tears which followed, sent a gleam of light through Lena's clouded brain. From her womanly instincts she knew in a moment that Will Siddon was something more to Belle than a common prisoner. Consequently, she grew deeply interested in the case and appeared to vie with Miss Blanding in the care and nursing of the sick man, and either one or other of the women was always with him.

CHAPTER VIII.

After the night the day will break;
After the storm the sun will shine;
After sorrow and many an ache
Will come sweet peace and rest divine.

AT the time of which we write, there dawned upon the prison walls at Carson one of the most glorious May-day mornings. The sun came up with a hazy veil about his face, through which he looked with subdued radiance, like that which overspreads the countenance of a beautiful maiden on her way to the hymeneal altar. Tinged with his rising glory, the hill-tops smiled at each other, and the tall pines upon the higher levels waved their tops in solemn worship, while through their moving branches the deep, low music of the forest, ordained by God to cheer the lonely mountains, murmured everlasting praise. The birds seemed more numerous than before, and in their joy went chirping and chattering about the prison wall and building as if to test the strength of the air to bear their melodies. The little flower garden which had been planted in honor of "Betty Maloney," from seeds and shrubs obtained from outside the walls, was unfolding its first, fair buds.

The pink and heliotrope vied with each other in their efforts to breathe fragrance through the open chapel door and the raised window of the sick-room, while half-blown roses appeared to nod Good-morning to Betty every time she came in sight of them. So charming did nature appear in her spring robes that the most hardened convict within the prison walls felt and acknowledged her benign influence. On that especial morning every one appeared to have dressed his best, and after breakfast was over the prisoners began

to congregate about the "chapel," as it was called—a room about 30x40 feet, sides and ceiling finished with matched boards, varnished. It was used as library, reading-room, and for religious services. With the morning work of the kitchen and dining-room completed, and everything put in "ship-shape" order, as usual, Betty and Lena dressed for church. Before going they paid the sick-room a visit, being the third for Betty that morning. They found the doctor in attendance, who conveyed the cheering intelligence that the case had passed its climax; that the patient was better, and slowly but surely returning to consciousness. Belle was overjoyed at the good news, and went into the morning service with an overflowing heart and words of praise and thanksgiving on her lips.

Soon a Carson City minister, who had been for some time preaching at the prison, made his appearance, but without his "better half," who always presided at the organ, leading the music.

Mr. Dean, a little dark-complexioned man, with a full round, intelligent face, took his position behind a table prepared for him, on which he placed his bible, hymn-book and hat.

"Friends," he commenced, "I fear we shall be without music to-day, as my good wife was indisposed this morning, and, consequently, could not come. Nevertheless, I will endeavor to sing something.

Then he commenced in a hum-drum way to dole out "Absent Day," without any tune; after a few turns, he gave it up as a bad job, saying:

"It's no use. Let us pray."

In his sermon there was much pathos and beauty. Among other things, he said:

"The true greatness of this world consisteth not in temporal things, for they are as fleeting as the shadow of a summer cloud. Envy runs riot in our hearts at the sight of gaudy trappings, or at the badge of a little brief authority. Alas! how vain and unavailing are they when the shadows of

dissolution hang in the mind like thick curtains drawn about the chamber of death. Great wealth and temporal power draweth the heart from its natural moorings, which is ultimately found wrecked and desolate on the margin of the dark river. The golden candles of ambition will not burn in the mist and darkness of that hour. The only light yet discovered at the ferry beyond the narrow neck of life land which we are crossing so rapidly, is the scintillations of the pure soul sanctified. Good works, like the fragrance of sweet flowers, endure forever—twice blessed, blessing he that giveth and he that receiveth. Vicious natures in some cases, misfortune and uncontrollable circumstances in others, have brought us here together to-day, and there is not one within the sound of my voice who has not a sympathetic chord in his nature, which, if touched, would melt away the adamantine of the heart. Therefore, none are so absolutely bad as to be void of redeeming traits of character. Wherefore, then, should any human being be despised? Circumstances are easily conceived whereunder the greatest saint would have turned sinner and the greatest sinner to a saint. Then let the cloak of charity banish hatred from the heart, and let compassion melt at moral ailments. If the strong would help the weak to struggle with the world and their bad tempers, a temperate world, indeed, we would have. Poor, wretched lives, with a helping hand, and under the shield of their brother's God-like sympathy, would turn their slippery footsteps heavenward and climb back to respectability. There should be no shame, save in evil doing; neither honor, save in honest work. The king, who rules from lust of power rather than for the peace and prosperity of his subjects, is morally worse and lower than the menial who whines about his skirts. In these things the world is sadly out of joint; and so it will remain until we learn to love the true and good, and practice them, because they lead to God and joy hereafter."

After a short prayer the minister said:

"Since I made such a failure of the opening song, I will

inquire if there is any one in the audience who can play on the instrument and lead the singing?"

After a painful pause Betty Maloney slowly arose in her seat, and addressing the minister, replied:

"If you plase, sir, I think I can do it."

"Thanks, Miss Maloney," rejoined the minister, with an incredulous smile playing about the corners of his mouth; "please come forward, and be seated at the organ."

While she was doing so and preparing for the song, there were many sly winks and nods observable among the prisoners, as much as to say, "this is a good joke." No one had heard her sing. For months her heart had been so heavy that she found it an effort to speak above her breath, but the morning intelligence conveyed by the doctor that her lover was very much better, and slowly returning to consciousness, had given such consolation as to put a new song in her mouth.

"What hymn shall I sing, please?" said Betty, turning to the minister.

"Oh, any one you like," he replied.

At this she struck up the air of "Sweet Bye-and-Bye." Her touch of the instrument was so precise and delicate that, before the prelude was finished, every one looked inquiringly at his neighbor, or leaned forward to catch the deep notes as they fell. Then there came forth a low, rich tremulous voice, as if balanced in the scale of hope and fear. By degrees it gained strength and steadiness, while she sang.

"There's a land that is fairer than day,
And by faith we can see it afar,
For our Father awaits o'er the way,
To prepare us a dwelling-place there.

CHORUS.

"In the sweet bye-and-bye,
We shall meet on that beautiful shore;
In the sweet bye-and-bye,
We shall meet on that beautiful shore."

By the time the first stanza was finished everybody appeared lost in rapture. No one had ever before heard either the air

or the words. The girl became oblivious to the character she had for two months been playing, and as the sweet words rolled on she seemed inspired, and all her auditors really thought so. When she had finished the four stanzas, there was not a dry eye among all those hardened men, most of whom had bowed their heads on the backs of the benches. Betty was so overcome with the effort that her face fell in her hands as she ceased singing. A moment's pause, which was as the silence of death, then pulling her veil down over her face, she passed slowly out at the door and disappeared. Parson Dean was overpowered by the spell. For a time he could not talk. After somewhat gaining his composure, he said:

"Friends, you have witnessed a most wonderful performance. I have traveled much, and been in the ministry over twenty years, and in all my experience I never felt a more hallowed influence. It appears to me that I have been nearer heaven than ever before. This strange girl has given herself a cognomen, but she is no more 'Betty Maloney' than I am. Why she has abandoned home and friends for the strange roll of cook in a prison is incomprehensible. Nevertheless, she has a purpose, and when revealed it will certainly be discovered that she is an angel in disguise."

To this there was a lusty "Amen" all over the house. The affair was for days the talk of the place. Before this, Betty Maloney was considered a pure, generous, noble-hearted Irish woman. Now she had added to her other pet names that of the "Walking Wonder."

When Belle Blanding left the church after the song, which had caused so much feeling among the worshippers, she went directly to Will Siddon's room, where she found the doctor in conversation with him.

"Ah, Miss Maloney," said the doctor, rising as she entered, "I am glad you have come, that I may be relieved to look after some other patients. Mr. Siddon is much better. In fact he is himself again; fully returned to consciousness, and with proper care, will be out in a few days."

"Who is this, doctor, that comes to take your place?" inquired Will, in a weak, languid voice.

"This," replied the doctor, taking the girl by the arm and leading her up to the bedside, "is Betty Maloney, chief cook of the prison, and withal a wonderful woman in her way. Aside from her household duties she has taken upon herself the unpleasant task of looking after those sick or in distress, and so nobly filled the part of the Good Samaritan that she is everywhere received with favor. By her intercessions and earnest work the arm of one young man and the foot of another were saved, and in your case she has certainly been the means of saving your life."

"I thought I was indebted to your skill, doctor, for the favorable turn the case has taken."

"You are mistaken. Medicine never cured any one. Its province is to aid nature in throwing off deleterious matter, and thereby assist her in building up the system to healthy conditions; but it is patient, incessant, intelligent nursing, coupled with favorable surroundings, that so often cheat the destroyer out of his intended victims. For several days I had been in attendance, and counted you as lost, when this girl, hearing of your case, came with her angelic mission. Finding you in a damp, cold dungeon, insensible and alone, she went to work as if her life depended on your recovery. By an influence undefinable, which appears to follow her wherever she goes, Warden Curry was induced to allow you to be removed to this light, airy room, since which time she has hovered about you with all the devotion of a sister."

The manly nature of Will Siddon was much moved at the doctor's recital of the evidences of a devotion incomprehensible to him, and with an effort he stretched forth his hand with a grateful depth of feeling about his face, to which his feeble words could not give expression. She took the proffered hand in both of hers, standing with a bowed head, speechless.

"Through the turnkey, who has brought my meals, I have before heard of you, Miss Maloney. He never came but

he had a pleasant word to say about the 'girl in green;' and I could only echo 'yes' to all he said, for everything I took for breakfast, lunch or dinner convinced me that a wonderful change had come over the prison kitchen. For all that you have done for me I am more than grateful, and hope some day that we may meet again beyond the reach of prison walls. The doctor warns me that too much talk would cause a relapse, so I'll rest a spell and try to reach the dream-land, where I was this morning. I wandered along the rugged banks of a strangely silent river. It did not lash and murmur like the ocean; neither could I hear the rippling of the current. I could feel the influence of many other souls wandering on the shore with me, but each was absorbed in its own desolation. At times there would come glimpses of light and life from the other shore, and then would be heard the dying strains of some forgotten melody. At last, being weary with the search for a possible passage-way over the mysterious stream, I sat down worn and disconsolate, when I heard a heavenly voice singing:

"There's a land that is fairer than day,
And by faith we can see it afar;
For our Father awaits o'er the way,
To prepare us a dwelling place there."

"I felt that there could be no mistake this time. There was no other voice like it in all the world. No other being had ever been heard to sing those words. I knew they flowed from the lips of my beautiful Belle, and that she was on the other shore singing to encourage my coming. I fully resolved to go, and stepped off boldly into the flood; but the water was so cold and the sensation so strange that my eyes opened and I found myself here."

"Well," said the doctor, "the moment that you reached the cold, dark stream, and, in your imagination, heard sweet music, was that in which the soul was trembling on the brink of eternity. Now you have passed the climax, and with a little care will soon be well again."

So saying, the doctor took his hat and left the room.

Belle felt sure that Will had really heard her voice through the church partition in the morning service while wandering in semi-consciousness. What should she do—make herself known to him while they were together and alone? Her heart throbbed a responsive "yes," while her better judgment answered "no, wait and watch."

Under the kind and careful attention of Betty and Lena, Siddon's recovery was rapid. The second Sunday after the "Sweet Bye-and-Bye" song in the church service dawned clear and beautiful, equal in every way to the one previously described. Will was considered sufficiently well to take his old quarters, preparatory to going to work in the quarry on the following day.

Belle felt deeply distressed at the thought of her lover being returned to the cold, dark stone cell, and fearing that another opportunity would not offer, she determined after the morning's work was done to reveal herself to him and take the consequences of his displeasure. Up to this time he appeared not to have thought or dreamt of her identity; nevertheless, he was very kind and respectful for the great services she had rendered him. One day he had said to her:

"Betty, at present I am a prisoner, without a crime, with over three more years of service to render. But should I ever get out of this place and prove my innocence of the crime of which I am charged, and find my darling Belle willing to share my shattered fortunes, will you return to our Kentucky home with us and be forever thereafter one of our household?"

She emphatically promised him that she would, and her greatest secret joy was in the hope of being able to fulfill her promise.

While the officers of the prison were at breakfast that morning, in their little side dining-room, with Betty as waiter, Mr. Curry, turning half round in his chair with a piece of meat on his fork, which he had just taken up to dispose of, said:

"Betty, I have good news for you,—or rather I don't know whether you will consider it such or not."

"What is it, Mr. Curry?" inquired Betty, with evident interest.

"Well," continued Curry, in a joking way, "you remember that fellow, Will Siddon, whom you have been so attentive to for the last two or three weeks?"

"Well," said Belle, trembling in every joint, "what of him?"

"Well, he has been pardoned."

"Pardoned!" shrieked Betty, almost at the top of her voice, at the same time dropping to the floor a dish of salad she had just brought in. "Pardoned, did you say?"

"Well, no, not exactly. The Governor has ordered Siddon's release, his innocence having been fully established."

At this Belle threw her arms around Curry's neck and wept like a child. After gaining sufficient composure, she pleaded for the privilege of being permitted to break the good news to Will, and at the same time show him the papers. Her manner was so earnest and excited, that Curry gave her the official document, and she moved rapidly towards her lover's room, followed by Curry and his assistants, whose curiosity had been greatly excited by the action of Betty; so they were at her heels when she reached the stair landing. Bursting into the room, and rushing up to Siddon, who had fairly jumped out of his chair with astonishment at the sudden approach of Betty and the officials, she exclaimed, as she threw her arms around him:

"Oh, Will! you are pardoned! No; not pardoned, but set at liberty on the ground that your innocence has been fully established."

"Are you really in earnest, Betty?" he enquired, drawing back from her embrace.

"Certainly, here are the papers."

Siddon took the document and read:

EXECUTIVE OFFICE,
CARSON CITY, May 24, 1862.

MR. ABRAM CURRY, Warden Carson Prison—Dear Sir:—It having come to my knowledge, through the dying confes-

sion of one Lo Loreno, coupled with ample corroborative evidence to establish the fact that said Loreno was the actual murderer of Jesse Blanding, for which crime William Siddon was apprehended, tried and convicted, and is now under your charge, serving out the sentence of the Court; Therefore, in consideration of the facts above recited, I,————, acting Governor of Nevada Territory, order and command you to immediately release and set at liberty the person of William Siddon.

(Signed), ————

Governor of Nevada Territory.

The unexpected suddenness of this affair unnerved Siddon to such an extent that he almost fell into the chair from which he had so recently arisen, great tears chasing each other across his pale cheeks, while Betty held on to his neck as if fearful she would lose him, her streaming eyes and broken, endearing, blissful exclamations, indicating that

> The bleakness of her pent-up ills,
> By Summer's sun were warmed to rills,
> Like snow-drifts from the Alpine hills.

"Dear Will, how happy I am to know that you are free, and without blemish on your noble name!"

"Well, Miss Maloney," replied Siddon, endeavoring to extricate himself from her grasp, "I am under many obligations to you for your attentions and deep concern for my welfare, but"—

"Miss Maloney, is it?" she exclaimed, with a broken, hysterical laugh, calling to mind the false character she had been playing, and running to a wash-basin in the corner of the room, gave her face a few vigorous rubs with soap and water, drying with a coarse towel. Then pulling off her red wig and shaking out her five-inch golden curls, the product of two months growth, (prepared that morning, with the intention of throwing off the mask so long worn, and revealing herself, but under altogether different circumstances from those at the time existing,) she turned a radiant face, full of joy and loveliness, toward Siddon, who gazed in blank amazement as if an apparition stood before him.

"Can I believe my own eyes!" he exclaimed. "Is it possible that I behold my own Belle Blanding, just emerged from the garb and appearance of an Irish servant girl?"

"It is possible. Believe your own eyes. I am your own Belle Blanding, who, for more than two months assumed the garb and duties of prison cook, that I might be ever near you to watch, work and wait. Faith, hope and perseverance accomplish all things."

At this juncture the officers of the prison, fully comprehending the situation, withdrew, leaving the lovers locked in each other's arms.

After the rapture of their sudden and unlooked-for bliss had somewhat subsided, the question was asked by Siddon: "What shall be our line of action for the future? What shall we do with ourselves?"

Belle, her head on his shoulder, and looking lovingly and confidingly up into his manly face, replied:

"Will, for years you have been my guardian angel. Wherever you have been, there my mind and heart have been also. Trustingly, I have followed you, and at every turn of the cruel wheel of fortune, I have suffered on the rack with you. Back in my simple Kentucky home, when but a school-girl, with the first blushes of womanhood tingling my cheeks, I watched your coming and going as the lone dove does for the coming of her wandering mate. When you spoke in earnest, your words were law to me, more sacred than the Holy Text, for I knew they had no two constructions. I can hardly tell you why it is I am so foolish, nor of the spell that binds me to you as with a golden chain; but I do know that it brought me hither, like a moth to a burning lamp. Comfort, home and friends were lost to sight, for I saw no sunlight except in your smiles. With this confession on my part—you knew it all before—I am content to leave the rest with you."

"As man and wife," Siddon slowly said, "we would be relieved of much embarrassment. But that which sorely troubles me is: Whence will come our living? For I am short of cash to buy a decent breakfast."

"If that is *all* you sorrow for, banish the thought. We now have freedom, health and willing hands to work. Besides, I have two full months' wages; the Warden gave it to me this morning. Here is the money—ten double-eagles. Please keep it for me, Will. This sum will rent a little cottage in Carson, or, if you prefer, in Virginia City; buy a stove and some cheap furniture, sufficient for a start in keeping house, and, when the morning meal is over, with its hot cakes and steaming Java, which you used to love so well, I'll teach a music class, or, if it does not offer, then I'll take in washing until better days may come, or we return to our old Kentucky home."

She ceased to speak, and as she did, her arms went round his neck, and her cheek fell upon his bosom.

"All is well," said he, as he kissed away her happy tears. "My darling girl, I never doubted that we could live by honest work; but then I did not wish to bring you down so low."

"Do you call it low to live and labor for those we love? Poverty is the fire in which the lovely soul is recognized amid the heaps of dross and blackened ruins of selfish natures. Low to labor? Speak not such words, I beseech you, for the pathway that leads to useful lives and joy hereafter lieth through fields white unto the harvest. He who lives and labors not, is only a drone upon the earth, with his little soul cramped and distorted beneath a load of indolence and bodily excesses that finally crowd it into nothingness—blank, aimles, and unknown, and—

"There, my little philosopher!" exclaimed Siddon, smothering her words with a succession of kisses. "I am convinced on the labor question; and since you have agreed to leave the whole matter with me for a decision, I'll tell you what I think we'll do."

"Well," replied Belle, drawing back and looking into his eyes with a bewitching smile, "what do you propose?"

"It is now ten o'clock," said Will, drawing out his old silver watch. "The parson will commence Sunday service

in the chapel at eleven. So you run and fix yourself, and I will change these prison stripes and don my Kentucky jeans suit (which you will remember was new and handsome when I kissed you good-by, to come to this wild country.) Then we will go down and have the parson tie the knot immediately after the morning sermon."

"Oh, Will!" said she, blushing deeply, "that's an awful short notice—only an hour to dress and get ready for so important an occasion."

"Well," he replied, running his fingers admiringly through her golden curls; "I think it is very fortunate that you have no more time; for, if given the usual weeks for preparation consumed by ordinary mortals, you would look so beautiful and sweet that I should fear the honey bees and butterflies would carry my darling off before reaching the altar."

"There, now!" said she, gleefully, placing her hand over his mouth; "that's flattery sufficient for one day."

And in another moment she was gone.

* * * * *

The revelations of the morning soon became known among the employés and prisoners, and somehow the rumor got out that there would be a marriage in the chapel during meeting; consequently, when the hour arrived, everybody, even to the Chinese kitchen helper, was present.

After Parson Dean had completed the morning service, which was unsually good, he said:

"Friends, at the close of the hour of worship two weeks ago to-day, the prison kitchen-girl, calling herself 'Betty Maloney,' to the surprise and delight of every one, came forward and sang some wonderful words in a wonderful way. You will no doubt remember that I spoke of the exhibition as something remarkable, expressing the opinion that she was no more Betty Maloney than I, but an angel in disguise, with a purpose to accomplish. Sooner than I anticipated has the sequel come. From the revelations made to-day, it appears that this young lady left home, affluence and friends, traveling several thousand miles in order to seek

out and aid a lover whom she learned was imprisoned here for the murder of her only brother. Knowing the noble nature of her friend, she felt convinced that there must be some mistake, or foul play in his apprehension and conviction. With this idea in view, she came out here, and being deprived of the privilege of communicating with him by letter or otherwise, she resolved to share the hardships of life in a prison, in order to be always near her betrothed. Hence, as a cook, she has served you faithfully for two full months. Three weeks since, learning that her lover was seriously ill with typhoid fever, she managed to have him removed from his quarters in a damp, cold cell, to a light, airy room adjoining this building, where, with incessant care and nursing, she managed to bring him out of a sickness which the doctor had pronounced manifestly fatal. This morning a communication, with other documents, were received by Warden Curry, from his Excellency, Governor ————, of Nevada Territory, setting forth the fact that one Lo Loreno, a half-breed Spanish Indian, had, upon his dying bed (in a cave a few miles north of Virginia City, where he had received a death-wound in resisting the recapture of a lady he had kidnapped and taken to the place) confessed, and fully established the fact that he was the murderer of Jesse Blanding, instigated by revenge for a blow struck him in consequence of an insult offered an estimable lady by the name of Mrs. Augusta Vinton at a party some three years since. Upon this showing of the case, the Governor has ordered the unconditional release of William Siddon from prison, he having been by said revelations acquitted of all blame, and, instead thereof, was proved the dearest friend of the murdered man. The devotion this young lady, Miss Belle Blanding, has shown for Mr. Siddon is worthy of all praise, and puts to shame the spasmodic affections of the average 'girl of the period.' The continuity of purpose and strength of character developed in the lives of these young people are typical of country life. Broad fields in which to labor, pure air, and God's everlasting sun-

light shining down into the soul, man grows and matures more in accordance with the Divine purpose than do those who dwell in walled cities, with basements and back yards damp and sour; where ease is sought at the expense of health and where wealth passes current for respectability, accumulated it matters not how; while, for their intrinsic value, worth and virtue are taken at a discount.

"Now, my friends," continued Parson Dean, "having given you a brief account of the remarkable experiences of these young people, since it is their earnest wish, and it being meet and proper that it should be so, I will unite them in the holy bonds of wedlock. Mr. Siddon you will please bring Miss Blanding forward."

Will arose from a side seat with his blushing affianced on his arm, and, advancing, stood before the minister facing the audience. As before indicated, Siddon was dressed in his well-preserved Kentucky suit, with a spotless white shirt and black neck-tie. Miss Blanding wore a neatly-fitting lavender-colored stuff dress, with a light line of lace running in front from the waist to the throat, while her neck was enveloped in a white ruffle of delicate pattern. Thus was her fine, round, womanly form shown so symmetrically and well proportioned, that one felt

As if viewing an imaginary form,
Built up in the softest Summer dream.

Her golden hair clustered and curled about her ears and neck in grotesque attitudes, so strange and weird, that he who viewed was more disposed to caress than comb them.

And her face of perfect features
Sat there in such sweet composure,
That, while intently viewing it,
The roughest man in all that crowd
Of seared and hardened criminals
Could feel attraction's honeyed drops
Running through his calloused heart.

During the entire service there was deep and earnest attention on the part of the auditors. When finished, and

the minister had pronounced the couple man and wife, after a few words with the bridegroom, Mr. Dean, continuing, said:

"Since Mr. Siddon and lady have for some time been associated with the Prison, and are consequently more or less attached to all its inmates, every one, so desiring, will now have the privilege of congratulating them, and saying good-bye, as they leave this afternoon for Virginia City, probably never to return to this place."

No second invitation was required. The officers of the Prison, and then the convicts, in turn, came forward with extended hands and congratulations; but, instead of leaving the chapel, each one resumed his seat. Several of the subordinate officers, with a sprinkling of prisoners, were observed to approach and enter into a whispered conversation with the Warden, who, after a few moments, motioned the men to their seats, when he said:

"Parson Dean, it is the unanimous wish of officers and prisoners alike, that Mr. Siddon shall speak to them in words that he may conceive most fitting; after which, they desire that his good lady shall sing them that soul-stirring song of hers, 'In the Sweet Bye-and-Bye.'"

The minister turned and repeated the request to Siddon, who, facing his auditors, stood motionless for more than a minute. His earnest face, with his high, broad forehead, gave evidence of superior mental power, and even before he began to speak, those present felt the influence of the brave, manly spirit within. Hesitatingly, he commenced:

"Officers and men, at present my heart is so full that I fear neither words nor ideas are at command sufficient to enable me to say just what I would like. The sudden and unexpected changes which have been wrought in my relations within the last few hours are well calculated to throw any ordinary mind off its balance. Nevertheless, since this is probably the last opportunity I shall ever have to speak to you, I feel constrained to make the effort now. For more than a year, I have been one of your associates under

restraint. During this time I have endeavored to add to my little knowledge of human nature, in order to discover if possible the motives which move men to action, the antidote for crime, and how to drain out the bogs of moral and mental misery, caused to run back and sour chiefly because of 'man's inhumanity to man.' So warped and strained by organization and education is our vision of what we are, and what the world about us is, that we see as 'through a glass darkly.' Every one evolving the light by which he is guided through the lens of his own mind, differing in construction and education from that of every other, accounts for the different angles of vision from which the same thing is viewed. Hence we have three hundred isms, founded upon as many shades of meaning eliminated from the language of a single book, each sect claiming that its construction is right, and that every other one is wrong. There is nothing absolutely good or bad in *any* opinion whatever, only in so far as its influence tends to good or evil; and he who measures the purity and worth of men by the opinions they hold, measures with a broken reed, which he would do well to turn upon himself and measure the calibre of his own mind. It is bigoted opinion, leagued with some heresy, coupled with selfish natures, that has, in nearly every generation since the birth of the race, robbed the world of much that is pure and beautiful. Whatever clearly leads to good should be promoted, without special inquiry as to the source whence it comes. In this physical and intellectual world, evidence is not wanting for believing that there is no effect without a corresponding cause. A disposition to commit any crime may have its origin before the creature's birth, or may be induced by want, vicious education, or social influence; but, whatever the cause, the fault lies as much in the parents, or in the condition of the community in which he lives, as in the culprit. This fact should have no influence to condone or excuse wrongful acts; but rather that punishment may be so tempered with mercy and charity as to rob it of that savage conception that the lash and

prison were instituted in order to be revenged on evil-doers. The true reformer, whether out in the world or within prison walls, endeavors by the restraint of viciously-inclined persons to protect society, and at the same time use such methods of treatment as will tend most certainly to reform the culprit. In the most objectionable degrees of crime, it is an absolute necessity that punishment should be swift and severe, so that others disposed to evil may be restrained from wrong-doing through fear of the law; otherwise, it would be impossible to maintain civil order, on which modern society is constructed. The curse of the whole system of criminal jurisprudence is in the inequalities of its bearings. A technical flaw and sharp practice operates to turn loose thousands of the worst criminals annually. So potent is wealth in its influence on the law's delays and ultimate administration, that the poor we always have with us in prison, but the rich never—or hardly ever. The poor mother, who, when every other resource is exhausted, takes from a neighboring window a loaf of bread to feed her famishing children, is furnished lodgings in the lock-up, while forgers, embezzlers or safe-robbers, whether in the form of a burglar, or bank manager, who filch the earnings of honest people, are let out on bail upon depositing a part of their stealings, perhaps ultimately to go free, when, through delays and postponements, the case has grown obsolete and forgotten. For every ten crimes committed there is possibly one conviction, and for every five convictions there is one who serves out the full sentence of the Court. Hence the penalty of the law is so often defeated or evaded, that its terror to the evil-disposed loses much of its force and effect. If the penalty of the law was more certain, crime would be proportionately less frequent. It is the practice of the Courts to give an absolute term of years in the State Prison, varying in extent by the apparent degree of the crime committed; and when the convict has served his time out, even though he be the vilest of creatures, he is turned loose upon society with the certainty that he will commit other offenses.

There should be no discharge until a prisoner can carry with him substantial evidences of reform. A positive term of imprisonment should be given, as now, with the addition, 'and until substantially reformed,' for which, before dismissal, the Warden's certificate should be issued, and, upon a subsequent conviction, the prison walls should close around him during the remainder of his natural life. If this was the immutable order, there would be few second convictions. A passport of the Warden to a discharged prisoner would cause him to be received back into the community with a degree of favor which would enable him to earn an honest living. The practice now is to turn the poor creature out into the world without a friend or a dollar, with the probability of his former atecedents being discovered. What chance has such a one to reform? Under the circumstances, he is almost certain to drift back into crime. Provision should be made for those discharged, until some avenue to an honest living could be procured. I throw out these suggestions simply to show the many defects in our system of jurisprudence, and in the treatment of criminals. It is frequently the case that the prisoner is released from confinement with his heart full of bitterness on account of real or imaginary wrongs imposed upon him in conviction, or while serving out the order of the Court; and he goes forth with the determination to be revenged upon the community. This feeling should be avoided; for while we cannot help carrying about the heart a sense of injury for wrongs inflicted, it should be more in sorrow than in anger. It is true that Courts and juries are, in this age of the world, very uncertain, and they sometimes convict the wrong man, as in my case; but when the wrong is not *intentional*, it should be forgiven; for in our poor, little, biased lives we are *prone to err incessantly*, and consequently, where an injury is not intentional, we should forgive, as we hope to be forgiven."

When Siddon ceased speaking, there was a long pause; Parson Dean then said:

"Mrs. Siddon, the remaining part of the programme is that famous song of yours. Will you favor us with it?

Belle immediately came forward, and, taking her position at the instrument, commenced the sweet air, her husband standing by and joining in the chorus with a deep, full, melodious, bass voice, making the little chapel ring. Belle and Will were so much affected that they shed copious tears; so did all their auditors.

After the benediction, the newly-married couple left the prison, followed by compliments and good wishes from all present.

That night found Siddon and his bride in a quiet, comfortable boarding-house in Virginia City. The matter that now most concerned him was to find out what disposition had been made of his mining claim since his confinement. Upon inquiry, and a personal examination, he found that the Ophir mine had been developed close to his claim, and that the ground he had staked out and worked upon was claimed by this company. Siddon demanded possession; this being refused, he instituted an ejectment suit for its recovery. All the law points were apparently in Siddon's favor, he having legally located it, and having done all the work required under the law up to the time of his arrest and imprisonment, since which time he employed one of the men who was now interested in the Ophir, and the chief operator in the attempt to swindle Siddon out of his property, to do all necessary work to continue the legality of his claim. Will's case excited much sympathy in the community when it was known what he had suffered because of a false conviction and imprisonment. This sympathy, coupled with his vigorous prosecution, soon brought the Company to terms. A compromise was effected by which Siddon received $100,000 in gold coin, he therefor releasing all claim to the mine. With a check on the Bank of California for the amount, accompanied by his charming wife and Lena, he started for his old Kentucky home, by way of San Francisco.

CHAPTER IX.

THE burning anguish of a wounded heart,
Stabbed by neglect and suspicion,
Bears heavily upon a noble soul.

IN following a tangent of our story, divergence from the main thread of it has been inevitable; henceforth some of the chief characters will be, for a time, more intimately associated, until the cold hand of fickle fortune shall have separated them forever. The last related of Augusta Vinton was her taking leave of Miss Belle Blanding in front of the Carson City Hotel, where she stepped into the stage coach bound for Sacramento. Nothing worthy of note transpired during the journey, unless it was the deep depression of Mrs. Vinton's spirits. The future to her seemed dark, indeed. She was leaving home, husband, child and friends, probably never to return; and all because of a foul suspicion, that had scarcely any foundation.

In reviewing the past Augusta could now see wherein she had often erred, but innocently and unintentionally. It was true, Mr. Vinton himself had laid the foundation for the difficulty, in insisting on her accompanying Mr. Barring to places of amusement, on riding and foot excursions, even when she had protested, while her finer feelings recoiled from a nature so coarse as his. From first acquaintance she had known that her husband was nervous, particular and impulsive, but she had never discovered his jealous disposition until it was too late to amend her mistake. Had she absolutely refused Barring's admittance to the house, and never had spoken to him except in the presence of her husband, it might have been different; but then Mr. Vinton would certainly have been offended had she slighted this

man in any way. Under the circumstances, how could she have acted differently? 'Tis true she might have refused to leave home at the bidding of her husband, and persevered in living down the difficulty in spite of abuse, contention and wrangling; but then her spirit of independence was too well developed to brook insult and contumely without resentment. It would probably have been better had she not left home, remaining in Virginia City until the jealousy and wrath of her husband subsided, when possibly she would have been permitted the privilege of returning to her own household; but, under the circumstances, could it ever again have been a home in the full sense of the word? Such thoughts as these occupied her mind until the stage reached Sacramento.

Mrs. Vinton put up for the night at the Arcade. After supper she slipped out on the street unobserved, moved down towards the river, and commenced a promenade along the levee. The night was clear, and the moon full as she looked over the brow of the Sierra Nevada mountains through the shining cottonwood trees of the city down into the waste of waters, for the spring flood was running dark and threatening within a yard of the levee's top. Soliloquizing thus, she said:

"How grand and awful you are, old river, when the snow-drifts of the storm king are melting from the mountains! What little mites we mortals are when compared to Nature's great forces. An hour's measure of your turbulent moving bosom would be sufficient to drown all the heart-burnings and nameless sorrows of the world. Why, then, should a homeless wanderer, with only ruined hopes for a companion, hold on to the broken reed of life while oblivion for all sorrow is within reach of an outstretched hand? If it were designed that we should live when life has ceased to have a charm, O God! why hast Thou not given sufficient fortitude for this trying hour? The great ocean hath a bed in which to rock its corals, and it is allowed to sing along its everlasting shores. The mountains have

their clefts in which the storm king marshals all his forc
and the ever-murmuring forests for companionship. The lo
ing herds take comfort in their feeding, and, as evidence
affection, lick each other's sides, and in contentment lie do
together for the night. Even the birds possess the charm
singing back their wandering mates; but a woman, cut lo
from the moorings of her heart's affections, can no m
survive than can a flower torn from its parent stem. I
then this thought of self-destruction somehow haunts
with a curdling vision of the future; for if to die is but
be translated into another life, we must surely carry with
burning memories of misdeeds here; otherwise we wo
never know ourselves. Then surely the nearer complete a
perfect we are here, the nearer complete and perfect
we be beyond the grave. If this be true—and who
doubt it?—then life is but a day of time, given to prep
for ages of eternity. If good thoughts and deeds give
and peace forever to the soul, evil deeds will as firmly le
their impress to vex and gnaw the conscience with remor
If I know my heart, I have no sin of intent worthy of
name. Then why should I taint the spirit with the worst
crimes? No, it is better to live on with affection's blas
roses scattered to the wind, with only a faint perfume
what they were, remaining, than seek destruction in
rolling flood; for one who lives and suffers for the ri
cannot live in vain. And as the sun comes out the bright
after struggling through great storms and winter winds,
will the soul shine brightest when chastened by good wor
wrought out in sorrow and anguish. It is not only a cri
but it is cowardly to shirk the sorrows and hardships of
by sneaking out of the world under cover of self destructi
No, I will return to my father's house; there I will certai
find rest and quiet in which to nurse my misery."

Thus saying, she slowly retraced her steps to the ho
and sought unsuccessfully to forget her troubles in refreshi
sleep. Leaving on the down river boat next morning, she,
due time, reached her childhood's home.

Augusta Vinton had not been under her father's roof more than a few days before she had confided everything relating to her matrimonial troubles to her mother, who, of course, mother-like, poured the oil of sweet sympathy into her daughter's heart. Nevertheless, having a stern sense of propriety, which, with her, outweighed every other consideration, she advised Augusta to return to her husband, and by precept and example, live down the unpleasantness. To this Mrs. Vinton objected, declaring that the state of the case reached such a ruinous crisis before she left Virginia City, that a reunion with the man who had so shamefully abused and maltreated her was out of the question.

Knowing his stern, unyielding disposition, neither Augusta nor her mother dared tell Judge Dane of the trouble. Consequently, weeks elapsed before he even suspected that anything was wrong. But Augusta's prolonged stay, without any mention or apparent intent of returning home, coupled with her evident reluctance to speak of her husband when in the presence of Judge Dane, awoke a suspicion in his mind that there was a family skeleton hidden somewhere about his daughter's household. So, one evening, while seated in the parlor with Augusta and her mother, the Judge, after pondering the matter over for some time, said:

"Augusta, you have now been here for several weeks, and in all that time you have hardly spoken of your husband, or home affairs; and I have noticed your inclination to evade the subject when approached. Why is this, and what's the matter over the mountains? Have you had any difficulty with your husband; and, if so, what is the cause of it?"

This sudden and unexpected drift of her father's thoughts very much confused Mrs. Vinton. Nevertheless, she felt that evasion would be more embarrassing than the whole truth; consequently she at once resolved to unbosom the matter fully and fairly, and then crave her father's sympathy and indulgence. She commenced by going back to the origin of the trouble. How she met Mr. Barring for the first time on the way to Virginia City; how he had excited her

sympathy and grateful remembrance by defending her against insult from the mountain robbers; the attachment Mr. Vinton manifested for the saloon-keeper, and the obligations he was under for the aid and support Mr. Barring had rendered him; and, to court his further favor, how Mr. Vinton had compelled her to accompany Mr. Barring to public parties and to private socials; that after leaving the hotel, and going to keeping house, Mr. Barring had sometimes called when her husband was absent, but, upon each occasion, was treated only as a friend; that while she felt he had an ulterior object in view in coming, nevertheless he was always respectful; consequently she had no valid reason to refuse him admission, fully believing that her husband would have been deeply offended had she treated the saloon-keeper otherwise; and how she was abused and finally driven from home because of a groundless suspicion that she was improperly intimate with this man.

"Well," exclaimed the Judge; "I am surprised at this recital! Why did you not tell Vinton of Mr. Barring's importunities before the affair reached a crisis?"

"My husband was cognizant of this man's coming, which usually occurred when he was present; and as to a crisis or a suspicion of one, such a thought never entered my mind."

"From some few words which dropped from Vinton's lips more than a year since, I could have told you that he was not resting well in conjugal faith."

"Then, father, why did you not tell me; for it might have been the means of avoiding all this trouble?"

"Well," replied the Judge, reflectively; "I did not at the time think it my place to interfere in matters of this kind. Nevertheless, I can now see wherein it would have been for your benefit. But, since the difficulty has gone so far, what do you propose to do about it?"

"Well, father, what do you advise?"

"My advise is that you immediately return to Virginia City. Go to your home, make proper apology to Mr. Vinton for what you have done, and I think he will be man enough to take you back to home and confidence."

"But, father, what shall I make apology for? I am not conscious of having done any wrong. He drove me from his shelter without reason or a just cause for even an evil thought. Shall I return to him with an apology, when it is his place to come to me with one?"

"The woman is the weaker vessel, and she should without question bow to every reasonable mandate of her husband."

"Then you conceive her to be a slave in a joint and equal partnership, with insufficient liberty to declare a right or to resent a wrong?"

"Tut, woman! That has always been your trouble. Instead of concession, you answer with an argument. When told your duty you are disposed to question the words, even though spoken by your father. I am out of patience with you, and will have no more of your nonsense. Prepare to return to Virginia City within three days."

"Dear father," replied Augusta, kneeling before him; "I pray that you will not cast me out upon the cold charities of the world. I am willing to be the slave of your household, to go and come at your bidding, without a word or murmur; but do not doom me to misery or death. From the tone and manner of Mr. Vinton at our parting, I am sure that my proposal to return to his bed and board would be treated with contempt and scorn. Oh, father! Save me this ignominy, and allow me to remain with my mother, until such time as a way may be made possible for my return other than that over a crushed spirit and a hopeless womanhood. If nothing less will satisfy you, I will even travel to Virginia City, take quiet lodgings in the town, and earn my living with my needle, until such time as I may be enabled to return to my home with some degree of respect. But, for Heaven's sake, do not force me back into the arms of a man whose present mental condition is such as to preclude the possibility of unity or harmony, or even respectful treatment."

"No, Augusta! Your pleadings are in vain! My mind is fully made up. You must return to your husband; there is no other alternative left you. I shall be going to San Fran-

cisco on Thursday next. Please be prepared to accompany me, and I will arrange about your ticket and baggage."

So saying, Judge Dane arose and left the room. Augusta then turned to her mother, and, in a flood of tears, besought her intercession. Mrs. Dane was much troubled about the matter and endeavored to console and encourage her daughter for the trying ordeal. But she could give Augusta no hope or relief from her embarrassing situation, for she felt that she dared not act contrary to Judge Dane's will, which had ever been to her as unquestioned and as sacredly adhered to as were the laws of the Medes and Persians.

On the day and hour appointed for her departure, Augusta was ready, for she knew sufficient of her father's disposition to realize that there was no dodging his mandates. Bidding an affectionate adieu to her mother and younger brother and sister, the father and daughter departed, landing in San Francisco about one P. M. They went to the Russ House for lunch, after which Judge Dane left Mrs. Vinton, to see about the ticket and a conveyance. He returned about half-past two, saying as he handed the ticket to her, "The boat will leave Washington street wharf for Sacramento at four o'clock. A hack will be here to take you and your baggage down at 3:30. All things, then, are arranged for your departure. And now, since my home boat leaves at three o'clock, I having only twenty minutes in which to reach it, I must bid you good-bye. May God bless and restore you to your home and family."

When Augusta's father had departed,

> She felt like one left and lost
> In a breach of desolation.

And she sank, heart-sore and disconsolate on a sofa in the sitting-room where she had waited her father's coming.

"My God!" she murmured, "do I dream, or is this real? What a desert there is between what I am and what I might have been! Courted and flattered out of propriety, I unconsciously kindled the fire in which I am being consumed. Why is it that we cannot 'see ourselves as others

e us?' The heavy mantle of vanity and egotism in which e average mortal wraps immortal thought continually ammels our pathway to perfect lives. And then, we have little knowledge of ourselves, or what the world about us , that the noblest intent is often warped and dwarfed by ul construction into the basest wrong. Could we but grow ore charity on the brambles of aspersion, it would be like l poured on angry waters. But since I must take the world I find it, and get from the philosopher's hobby down into e nursery of my own misery, I feel like a child lost in a rk wood, and can do nothing but walk around and weep. only permitted to earn my living as a menial, even as a iter or chambermaid here in this great house! But then m so situated that busy tongues would make a burning andal out of an act so simple. My parents would disown , and Mr. Vinton surely glory in proclaiming 'I told you .' Then it does appear that there is no alternative left me t to go to Virginia City, seek out my former home, sub- it to taunt and insult, and feed on the dregs of ruined pes. Yes, I will go and bear it all; for my father says at duty demands it. My child, bereft, is waiting for its other, and with her pressed to my bosom, new germs of e, perhaps, would start out from my withered heart."

So saying, she arose with a firm resolve, and moved ward the door.——

"Oh, Mrs. Vinton, I am glad to meet you."

"Mr. Barring, as I live! How came you here?"

"Well, you know, I learned, as all Virginia City has, that ur husband abused you sorely, and then drove you from s home, all for nothing—only for doing what he bid you. I d not believe that he was such a man. To keep your com- ny he has urged me; and even slipped your arm out of his to mine, with the remark: 'Permit me, for I have an gent engagement at this hour, that must be met.' Then uld he hurry off, and leave us looking after him. He said me only a few days before you left the town: 'Good Bar- g, call in when you can. My wife has dinner always

ready just at five. It is seldom that I miss the meal; therefore, when you can, be with us at that hour.' Now, you will bear me out in this assertion, that I never called (with few exceptions) at any other time, and when not with us, it was because he failed to keep his word with you. And now to think, because I came sometimes to satisfy the wish of a fickle friendship, esteem has tumbled into its grave, and in its stead stands out the green-eyed monster, lashing his slimy sides into hectic fury. For myself I do not care; I shall soon outgrow it; but it is this cold, cutting, cruelty heaped upon an injured woman that I would resent. I have feared that the depth of this infamy would weigh so heavily on your heart that, to end your misery, the Evil One to self-destruction might persuade you; and feeling an interest in your welfare, which has grown with acquaintance, deeply strengthened by the sorrow of which I have been the innocent cause, and not being able to control my anxiety to know the worst, I have followed where you've led as if an unseen hand directed every step I have taken. To-day, while at lunch, I observed you seated at the table with your father—so I take it; and when he departed, leaving you here all alone, an uncontrollable desire came upon me to see and speak to you. Now, knowing the cause of my visit to the city and why I stand before you, I hope and trust you will pardon this intrusion, if such it may be termed."

Augusta gave her hand to him, and, as she did so, said: "I do assure you that I am surprised at your appearance here; but, since your explanation, I find it not within my heart to reproach you; and more especially at this time, when I need some friendly counsel."

"If counsel I can give, or earthly aid furnish you, command me what you will, and it shall be given freely and as tenderly as falleth the gentle dews from heaven."

"No sentiment, please, Mr. Barring," replied Mrs. Vinton with a sad smile. "But since you claim to be my friend and many evidences of it have been marked, I will confide to you my present woes and gloomy outlook for the futu

You know what happened over the mountains, so I need not tell you that. Like a wounded deer pursued, I left my ruined home. In that dreary journey hither, at every turn the coach made around a cragged cliff, my heart felt so sore and heavy that I longed to hide with it in some deep gorge, there to rest forever in the drifting snows. Sacramento reached, I spent half the night walking up and down the spongy levees, looking on the moving waters of the great river running dark and full. I walked so nearly on the line of life and death in that sad hour, that another pang of sorrow would have sent me whirling in the flood. But the remembrance of my mother's words of wisdom, taught me in my youth, that life is but a rugged pathway, in every step of which there is a struggle in the prone-like flesh to pull the spirit down; that the glory of existence is, that every hour of time may discover the courageous soul mounting to higher levels; that, at every advance, some corroding cord is broken, so that the next degree of progress is less encumbered, until the atmosphere of temptation hangs below us, like clouds beneath the mountain's summit. Thus I pondered on what the shadow on my soul would be when forced from its earthly habitation by a dripping suicide. The fear of death in such a way, coupled with the dread of worse to come, crushed my cowardly wish to leave the world; so, like a spaniel scared and whipped, I sought my childhood's shelter. I wished to live there always. But my father, learning why it was I left my husband, bid me return to Virginia City, and beg forgiveness and support at the hands of Mr. Vinton. I pleaded for some other fate, but to no purpose. Thus far am I on my way, and will leave the city this afternoon for Sacramento."

"Indeed," replied Barring; "I am much surprised at the course your father has taken in the matter; and I shall be still more so if you return to Mr. Vinton, who sent you away with taunts and insults."

"There appears to be no other course left me," replied Mrs. Vinton, sorrowfully. "My father has given me his decision, and, as a dutiful child, I must obey."

"My dear Mrs. Vinton, I take it that your years are ripe enough to say you'll go and come at no one's bidding, and especially in a case like this, wherein you have been dealt with harshly both by your husband and your father. And should you go to Vinton's house, as ordered, I can assure you, from what I have seen of him since your leaving Virginia City, that it would be worse than folly—worse than prison walls or death. For my single self I had rather mount the fag-ends of a thunder-cloud and ride out on the storm than be a tyrant's slave, cursed and spat upon, because, forsooth, I dared to live."

"But, my dear sir," persisted Augusta, "what else can I do?"

"What can you do? Why, you can make an honest living at anything to which you are disposed to turn a hand."

"Your argument, Mr. Barring, indicates that, under the circumstances, you would consider me justified in disobeying the order of my father?"

"I certainly do; for, while admitting that propriety should have some weight in making up your mind, it should be remembered that there are higher considerations to be taken into account than simple obedience to a harsh command. 'Tis true, I know that a good name in this world is worth much to its possessor. So anxious are mortals for even the semblance of the real, that the devil's dearest friends often court it in the livery of the Lord. The hollow-hearted knave will cut his brother's throat for a little gold to buy external respectability in a suit of costly clothes. You can take the common multitude, and if one, more lucky than the rest, discovers a daring pathway, although in following it he trample faith and virtue out of sight—like one who climbs a rotten stairway, that breaks below at every step—he coldly struggles for the summit of his desires; and, when reached, by aid of better men, he contemptuously gazes down on the duped and gaping crowd below. War's red hand, by many a monster for personal glory raised, has often filled the world with mourning for the noble slain. In

fact, there are so many mean and selfish natures, seasoned with deception, in the race for fame and place, that they stand out, singly and in clusters, like shining sepulchres in the everlasting cities, filled with dust and dead-men's bones."

"Then, Mr. Barring, you do not believe that virtue hath its own reward, and that villainy will eventually find its appropriate level?"

"Indeed I do, my dear Mrs. Vinton. But I sometimes wish that I could think otherwise; for in my moody moments, conscience gnaws so remorselessly at the lining of my misdeeds, that the animal of my nature stands appalled at the certainty of retribution. There is nothing clearer to my mind than that virtue will eventually find its full reward, with interest all compounded. But the physical make-up of some men—and women, too, for that matter—is so warped and distorted by circumstance, that their disposition to evil is continual; and you had as well call to a drowning man to catch hold of things beyond his reach, as to shout 'Reform' in the ears of such an one. In either case it requires an external force or influence, in order to save the struggling victim. Just here it was evidently the great Designer's purpose that the influence of the pure and good should fall upon those warped and selfish lives, like sunshine streaming through tangled forests upon the decaying everglades. As fragrant and beautiful flowers grow most luxuriantly about the borders of ancient sepulchres, revealing exquisite loveliness, and shedding rich perfume on desolation, thereby made less desolate, so it was intended that the wise, pure, and good of the world should constitute the leaven with which to lift poor erring mortals out of the sinful sloughs and quagmires into which they are continually falling. Such have little care or concern about the names by which they may be known, for having a conscientious duty to perform, and nerve to do it, neither looking to the right or to the left in search of perishable worldly wealth or honors. This is the position I think you should occupy. Why be concerned about what people say? Even a saint

can no more avoid slander than snow on the house-top can avoid the soot and cinders of the burning chimney; for at least every other head carries a tongue of calumny. No one, to satisfy a fiendish will, has the right to chain his equal to a state of misery. I believe in the potency of parental authority, duly exercised, and think that children should obediently bow to it, harsh and sinister though it may be. But for a woman of your age, possessed with strength, health and a vigorous mind, to think of making a baby of herself and ruin all her future hopes, because, forsooth, a father says, 'Augusta, you must do this thing,' surprises me beyond control. Now, in this dilemma, if you do what I can propose, your life shall be like a summer's dream, spent in an Eden of your own choosing. Will you hear me and abide by my decision?"

"Well, Mr. Barring, I must confess to being entertained by your dissertation on the woes and wants of human nature. Some points you have made are very good; with others I cannot quite agree. As to taking your advice regarding what shall be my future course, I cannot give consent until I hear your plans. What do you now propose?"

"Will you agree to hear me through without a word, and take no umbrage at what I say?"

"Since you have always treated me so kindly, I think I can safely promise you a hearing without interruption or offense."

"Thank you. I will be as brief as words will let me. But before I break new ground, please indulge me for a moment in summing up the past. You remember how and where I met you first; how we traveled in that rocking coach from the Garden City across the rolling plain, up among the oaks and murmuring foot-hill pines; and as by curves and circles we ascended towards the mountain's crest, we looked off on the hazy plains below. We saw the great sun, mist-laden, settle down into the ocean, like some sea-god taking his evening bath. Then came that ever-mysterious, awe-inspiring, phantom Twilight which lives only in

the solemn, primeval forests. And when the summit was reached, you will remember how closely Night was drawing her dark mantle about us, when the cry of 'Halt!' was heard ringing through the woods, and the demand for us given to dismount; how I was ordered out, and then the villains bid you follow; how, while leaning upon the vehicle for support from falling, one ruffian 'seized you for a kiss'—so he said—and at that moment I seized him. Letting you go for a more determined subject, we went struggling for the gulf that yawned below the road. As luck would have it, he went over first. Then came the second villain with pistol braced and shooting. At the first report the stage rolled off, and you fell prone to the earth. Then in mortal combat stood we, contending for mastery near your prostrate form. I can never tell you how it was; but at that moment something crossed me like a chill that froze up every wish to live unless you lived, unharmed. Thus my arm was nerved to madness, and when the blazing pistols belched their last, we clinched and rolled on to the road. A moment later he was taken, and I was left. Those kind attentions to my wound, with your breath of roses in my face, melted every nerve within me, and from that hour I loved you; and every hour since that time has strengthened my attachment. Stay, I pray you! Be not offended, for you agreed to hear me through. Had amicable relations continued between you and your husband, my lips, on this fond subject, would have remained forever sealed. But this alienation—and I presume it to be final—gives me a chance, with honor, to be heard, so I trust you will take it kindly, though I may have no ray of hope."

"Mr. Barring, I am much surprised at this mad and indiscreet revealing. How dare you make it to a married woman?"

"I did not dare at all. I could not keep it back. It ran out of my lips like honey from a glutted hive, in summer time."

"Nevertheless, it is inopportunely on your part to make such a confession. While I am a wife I cannot, in conscience, hear a lover's plea."

"In that, Augusta, you are right. I have said too much, I know. But if I had let this opportunity pass, I feared I should never have another. So, thus far, it will do no harm, but only tend to show that what I am and what I have are at your service. Now, if you will deign to hear a word for future use, I think I can suggest a plan that will disembarrass you, and give me hope."

"Then, name it, Mr. Barring; for since I have heard so much, a little more will make no difference."

"My plan is this: Truly now I would not speak but for your greatest good. You must not think of going to Virginia City. The greeting awaiting you there will be like that of a lamb's reception into the wolf's fold. Neither can you return to your childhood's home, for the doors are closed against you. To stay even here in this great city would be to you embarrassing. Therefore, since no resting-place can here be found, I would advise you to take a trip to Europe. Only a league from London live some of my people, where you will find a temporary home. Wait there for new developments, which will not be long in coming; for Virginia papers of a recent date contain notices of a suit entered by Vernon Vinton against his wife Augusta for a divorce from the bonds of matrimony. It would be worse than useless for you to stand a suit; better let the case go by default, and when it is through, you will be free to choose your future lot."

"He sent me from him. I have done nothing wrong. Then on what grounds can he obtain a divorce?"

"He has no grounds. It is all a shameful fraud. But, then, what need you care? The sooner you are rid of him the better for us all."

But, then, my child! What will become of her?"

"For the girl you need not fret. The Court will care for her; your father's house is the most likely place that he will send her, where you can see her at any time.. This, I understand, is Vinton's wish, and it cannot be otherwise than yours. This matter understood, what say you to my proposition? The Panama steamer sails to-morrow. Some

trusted friends of mine are taking passage, with their families, for England. If you'll go, I'll place you in their charge, and a pleasant trip you'll have, I'm sure. Augusta, will you go?"

These words said, Mr. Barring laid his hand upon her arm and looked up into her face. "I see you hesitate, and with reason, for it is an important step. But, then, what else can you do? If preferred, you may call the money to pay the expenses of the journey a loan, which can be returned at any time you like, without interest; and in no way shall you feel committed to me for this favor, nor in any degree to me engaged, but free to do as you wish, and go where you please, as happy as are the linnets. What say you, Augusta? Will you go? No breach of decorum can it possibly be considered for I cannot accompany you. If all goes well, I may meet you by-and-by. A year in Europe, traveling with safe friends, will do you good in health and spirits, and you can return when you please. Will you go, Augusta?"

"Mr. Barring, this is an unexpected proposal; one, in fact, surprising in its character. Nevertheless, I feel that it is better to take your advice, although of doubtful propriety, than submit to the injury and insult awaiting me in Virginia City. Therefore, with the understanding that I shall owe you nothing, in pledge or promise, other than, at some time, to return the principal of the money you may be pleased to loan me for the trip, I will go, hoping the future may develop a course of action that can be followed honorably and with safety."

"A thousand thanks for this determination, Augusta; and allow me to seal this promise with a simple kiss upon your hand. Now, all things having been understood, I will leave you in charge of the landlady for the night. To-morrow, I will call again, check your baggage at the dock, and see you fairly off. My prayer is 'peace be to you always,' and may you always think of me."

CHAPTER X.

High Heaven help the homeless outcast,
Lost to sacred love and bosom friends!
Like a bark cut loose from its mooring,
And pushed out on the moving stream,
Rudderless, neither compass for a guide;
With the fragrance of affection withering
About the heart, like that of roses, chilled
And scattered by winds and untimely frosts—
Where will the troubled, weary wanderer
Find repose and conscientious peace?

AT four P. M. of the day following the interview between Mr. Barring and Mrs. Vinton, the dark hull of the ocean steamer "Moses Taylor," left her berth at the dock, and moved out into the bay on her way to Panama. The calm, serene beauty of the early summer afternoon was such that nearly all the passengers were on deck as the vessel passed Alcatraz and Fort Point.

The hills that skirt the Golden Gate were putting on their sombre robes, with sufficient wild flowers and grasses left to relieve them of the barrenness which prevails in autumn. Although Mrs. Vinton had been introduced to the voyager friends of Mr. Barring, she sat silently apart from the happy throng, busy with her own gloomy thoughts. She began to realize the utter desolation of her position, and wept bitterly at the fatal blunder she had made in acceding to a proposal which would certainly alienate all her former friends, and cast a suspicion forever upon her fair name, that it would be impossible to remove.

"Will," said a lovely creature with an angel face, to her companion, as she stopped short in their deck promenade; "there sits a lady, by the mast, who I have certainly seen somewhere. She is evidently alone and in distress; for, in

passing, I noticed her eyes are red with weeping. May I go and speak to her?"

"Oh, pshaw!" replied her tall, handsome, broad-shouldered escort, laughingly; "you are always finding subjects for commiseration—some one on which to lavish words of comfort and encouragement. I shall really grow jealous of your outside attachments if you don't check this incessant flow of sympathy, running out after everything in sight down to a lame kitten."

"How you *do* talk, Will!" said she, looking up into his face, reproachfully, from the depths of her great brown eyes.

"Supposing you had a vessel in capacity equal to your most extravagant idea, and there was an everlasting stream continually running into it, filling it to overflowing, would you not allow poor, weary, thirsty, foot-sore travelers to sip at the little pools about your fountain?"

"Certainly, I would. But what has such an idea to do with the case in point?"

"I will answer your question thus: I am, figuratively speaking, that vessel," said she, with a twinkle in her eyes. "My love and attachment for you are boundless; and I can no more control my disposition to aid those less fortunate, with the overflow of a thankful, happy heart, than can a vessel contain surplus water running over its brim."

"That is a thought as sweet as yourself, my dear; and I would no more undertake to curb your generous disposition to do good than I would crush out of existence the rarest flowers, simply because of their exhalations of God-given perfume. With faith in your higher perception of noble work, wheresoever you may lead in that direction, I will follow."

"Come, then, and let us see who this lady is; for, as certainly as I behold the declining sun, I have seen that countenance before."

Stepping forward and addressing the drooping figure, she said:

"Pardon me, madam, for this intrusion upon your meditations; but your face appears so familiar to me that I could

not resist the temptation to learn whether or not I am mistaken?"

At this, Mrs. Vinton arose to her feet and looked wildly at the intruder.

"Oh, I have it now! Is not your name Augusta Vinton, and did I not room with you at Carson City, some months ago?"

"My name is Mrs. Vinton," replied Augusta, with much agitation; "and your face and voice appear familiar to me. But I cannot recall the name, or place of meeting."

"At the time I met you, my name was Belle Blanding. It is now Mrs. Will Siddon, and this is my husband. You remember, I spoke of him, and my trouble, in the confidential talk we had. You also had a sad story to tell. Don't you remember how I bid you adieu at the hotel door, after the night's lodging and breakfast, when you entered the coach for a trip over the mountains?"

"Oh, yes!" returned Mrs. Vinton; "I remember a sad, beautiful face, and I now see that yours contains many lines of resemblance to it; but how changed!"

"Yes," I know that I am changed in everything but in name, since that sad hour."

"And in that, too, it appears."

"Yes," replied Belle, laughingly, as she hung more lovingly on her husband's arm; "it seems that I am changed in everything, and I do not wonder that you failed to recognize me as that disconsolate, heart-broken girl you met three months ago. When sorrow is dissipated, and hopes of happiness consummated, viewed from that angle of vision, the world seems changed and new; the flowers appear more lovely, the birds sing more sweetly, the sun shines more brightly at his rising, and the moon seems always full; for when the heart is at rest in reciprocal love, and the mind feeds on contentment, haggard looks and emaciated forms fall away from us like the soiled summer feathers of a molting pheasant."

At this eccentric speech of his wife, Siddon laughed outright, while even the sad Augusta smiled audibly.

"Now, Will," said Belle, turning to her husband with a wink, "you run away, for I am sure we women have some secrets which you have no business to hear."

"Well, really," he pleasantly replied, "I am sure you have, and, although all secrets known are told to-day, you'll have one left to tell to-morrow."

So saying he bowed himself out of the way and left the ladies to themselves. In a niche between the mainmast and a large ventilator the friends sat down. By this time Fort Point had been passed. The sun was hanging over the great waste of waters, surveying the beautiful world about him, preparatory to his evening rest. Braced with the happiness in her heart, Belle felt the inspiration of the moment. Seeing the manifest reserve and demure disposition of her companion, she ran on at a glib rate about the sublimity of the scene. Gradually the conversation drifted on to personal concerns, in which Mrs. Siddon related the exciting experience through which she had passed since their separation at the Carson Hotel three months previously; how she went to the prison to see Will Siddon; his difficulty with the guard, and, in consequence, his confinement in a dungeon, with only bread and water for companionship. How she, in consequence of being refused permission to see her lover, conceived the idea of liberating him. Her adventure, in the dead of night; how she scaled the walls of the cell and gained an entrance. Of Will's refusal to attempt breaking jail. How, after reflection, she loved him so much better for his manly, noble purpose. She then gave a detailed account of her experiences as a prison cook; how she won the good-will and respect of all its inmates by kindness and strict attention to her duties; of Siddon's sickness and how she managed his case; and, finally, of the confession of Lo Loreno, in his dying hour, that it was he who had slain her brother on that terrible night in the streets of Virginia City. How, in consequence of this confession, and other corrobative circumstances, Will had been discharged from custody, freed from every taint of suspicion that he

murdered his best friend. Of their marriage; the successful compromise of their mining claim, their going over the mountains to San Francisco, and, after a short stay, taking passage, with Lena, on the steamer, bound for their old Kentucky home.

During this recital, Mrs. Vinton sat wholly absorbed in the story and in its eloquent narrator, and at its close she was so deeply affected that her eyes were suffused with tears. Seeing her distress, Belle slipped an arm around her companion's waist, and, drawing closely, said to her:

"Why is it that you are so sorrowful and downcast at the recital of these incidents? Although, at the time of their occurrence, so severely straining to my physicial and mental being, nevertheless, in their recital, now I feel as if possessed of a charmed life; for it will always be a matter of wonder to me from what source I received the nerve and courage to pass through such a trying ordeal."

"My dear Mrs. Siddon," exclaimed Augusta, with much feeling, "it is not a matter of wonder to me whence you receive the nerve and courage to pass through what you have. See that great sea-gull swoop down into and swim along the water, then rise again to repeat the effort. Is there any wonder in that?"

"No," replied Belle, looking at her companion in surprise; "it is the nature of the creature to fly, and thus seek its food."

"Look at that child, how it frolics and skips about the deck," continued Mrs. Vinton; "is there anything wonderful or strange about that?"

"No; it is the nature of children to be playful as kittens, and it would be unnatural were they otherwise disposed."

"Very true; and does not this rule hold good in every life? Can there be any act or effect without a corresponding cause? Had I possessed your mind and heart, Mrs. Siddon, I would not have been here to-day. Neither would you have been here, if constituted as I am. Of all the circumstances

entering into the make-up of human life, there is not one so potent as that of organization. The materials out of which the minds and bodies of men and women are composed, differ as much as do the multitude of tree varieties which grow up together in the forest. The condition of planting, coupled with the quality and variety of seed, makes the good or indifferent tree after its kind. So it is in the conception and development of all animal life. Like begets like, conditions being equal. 'Tis true, education and social influence have great bearings on development, as do the plane and chisel in skilled workmanship; but the greatest artist that ever lived, possessed of every modern device, can never make an oaken mallet out of a spongy piece of basswood. In our ignorance of what we are, and of the motive powers which move mortals to action, instead of going down to the foundation timbers of the structure for the cause, we content ourselves with scratching over the surface, like children hunting for ground nuts. For years I had no thought of these things, but moved along with the common current of events, knowing but little of myself, or of those about me. I can *now* see wherein I often erred in thought and action. Had I possessed your nerve and soul, calamity would never have overtaken me. For, with your innate knowledge of human nature, coupled with implicit faith in those you love, with energy and talent sufficient for every emergency, it would be as difficult for you to do a wrong act, harbor an evil thought or a selfish purpose, as it would be for a stream unaided to reverse its course and run up hill. Now, my friend, believing we are creatures of circumstances, in great part at least, when you hear the sequel of my sad story, I hope, in condemning the course I have taken, that you will season your reproval with the charity of silence."

"I promise you," replied Belle, laying her hand in that of Augusta; "for I believe you an honest woman, injured by a foul suspicion, which has no foundation in fact."

"For those kind words I thank you from my soul," replied Mrs. Vinton, with tears streaming down her cheeks. "I have

been turned out of my husband's and my father's home, without a cause, and am now a wanderer upon the high seas, destined for a foreign land, in search of an asylum among strangers."

Here Mrs. Vinton entered into a detailed statement of all that had transpired since she left Carson City; and finally, of the interview with Mr. Barring, who so warped her better judgment as to have induced her to abandon friends and kindred ties for a hazardous and aimless journey. Mrs. Siddon was evidently surprised at this revelation; but, with a woman's tact, she refrained from saying a word calculated to wound or intensify the feelings of her sorrowing companion.

"Mrs. Vinton, if you have been forced to this step by injustice, taunt, and insult, and do not care anything for this man Barring, come with us to old Kentucky, where you shall always have a home. We will be as sisters; my friends shall be your friends, and wheresoever I go there you shall be also."

"I fully appreciate your generous offer, Mrs. Siddon, and shall always remember it with pleasure. But, having promised Mr. Barring that I would go to his relatives in England, and stay with them until a final settlement can be effected between Mr. Vinton and myself, and although feeling that the agreement to take this voyage, with other foolish things said and done, will seriously compromise me in the eyes of former friends; nevertheless, since I have started out in the performance of the doubtful task, I shall endeavor to fulfill my obligation."

"Well," replied Belle, with a smile, "if you are really in love with Mr. Barring, it will possibly be the best thing you could do; but if not devotedly attached to him, you had better cancel the agreement and go with my husband and I, where your lines shall be laid in pleasant places."

"I cannot say," replied Augusta, with a flushed face, "that I am much in love with Barring; but he being the only one who has befriended me in my sore affliction, I cannot help feeling more or less attachment for him. I shall there-

fore not abuse his confidence by breaking my pledge, still hoping that something may yet turn up which will restore me to my home and parents."

"So be it, then, Augusta. Before you would confide in me, you made me promise not to scold you, and so I will keep my word; nevertheless, I must say that I condole with you, and wish your case was less embarrassing; but, inch by inch, you have, by circumstance, been led from the secure moorings of confidence and affection until return now seems difficult, if not impossible. 'The silver chord is loose, and the golden bowl is broken,' and you are a wanderer. As you said a short time since, had our lots in life been reversed, neither of us would have been here. With Will Siddon for a husband, he would probably have loved you as well as he does me; therefore, your happiness would have been secure, for he has no shadow or taint of jealousy about his nature. Had I married Mr. Vinton, I would ere this have remodeled him in a way that his little suspicious bumps would never have been developed. But then there is no use conjecturing what might have been, or pining over the past; for there is no hand sufficiently powerful or artistic to unravel an inch of the tangled skein. The present we have with us, with hopes for the future. Every day brings its work and its tribulations. Life is too short to sit down in idle repinings; and eternity too long and its retribution too well assured to allow the soul to be marred by evil thoughts or a taint of crime. I believe every one in this world has an appointed task, and that the measure of it is commensurate with the ability to perform. When adverse circumstances prevail to thwart the purpose of the Great Designer, and wrong results, like fair flowers blighted by untimely frosts, the soul sears and withers; and although tears of penitence may be shed, sack-cloth and ashes may be worn, friends may condone, and God may forgive; yet a crime, once fastened on the soul, is like the scar of the saber-cut—it will endure forever—or at least until worn out by ages of contrition and purifying influences."

"Come, ladies," said Mr. Siddon, approaching with hat in hand; "supper is announced. Moreover, you have been sitting here in the cold draft for more than an hour, oblivious to everything in sight; and I fear a further delay may cost you severe colds."

At this polite suggestion, Belle and her companion arose and accompanied Siddon down to the dining-room.

Several times during the voyage Belle endeavored to persuade Mrs. Vinton to abandon the idea of an European trip, accompanied only by strangers, who could feel but little interest in her welfare. To which solicitations she usually answered about as follows:

"My life, at best, is but a wreck of my former self. A fatality appears to have followed me from the date of my marriage. I know that my reserve and unyielding disposition have added much to my misery and my present forlorn condition; yet, while feeling that I am doing wrong, an unseen power seems to impel me onward. Having no hope of happiness whence I came, I feel like an escaped prisoner, wandering about, without a fixed purpose other than to evade pursuit. Therefore I shall keep my promise with Mr. Barring, with much grief and much concern, hoping for the best."

Arriving at New York, Will Siddon and his wife bid Mrs. Vinton an affectionate adieu, giving many kind words of advice, and expressing earnest solicitations for her future welfare.

After a few days spent in the city, for sight-seeing, the Siddons turned their steps, *via* Louisville, for their old home, where they arrived in safety. They were received by the entire community with open arms; and when the whole story of their trials and tribulations was made known, they were almost worshiped by their kind-hearted neighbors, who had seen them both as amiable, dutiful children. The fortitude and integrity, which had carried them through so many vicissitudes of fortune, were extolled and pointed out as examples worthy of a greater following. The blushing,

cherry-cheeked farm maiden and the sturdy plow-boy took courage at the thought that Will Siddon and his beautiful and beloved bride, were, like themselves, inured to labor in the kitchen and in the field, and that the early influence, associations, and education of this model pair, were received in that same rural district. To cap the climax, old Judge Blake declared that no part of the world could produce such fine specimens of men and women as Kentucky, and that to be possessed of all the attributes which make men God-like, the country must be his home, and to the manor must he be born.

Mr. Siddon fitted up the old Blanding homestead in accordance with the suggestions of his charming wife. The improvements were remodeled or built anew. Belle's little garden was enlarged and filled with the most choice shrubs and flowers. Here they have lived, honored, contented and happy ever since, surrounded by a numerous family of sturdy, industrious, well-educated farm-boys, and refined blushing, nimble-fingered maidens.

Dear reader, should you ever pass that way, do not fail to call. You will know the place, because there is none other like it. In leaving the highway you pass through a gate painted green, with a white picket fence on either side. Then leisurely walk up the broad well-graveled avenue, between two rows of large, handsome locust trees, which appear to bloom full half the year. The house, you will discover, is a Gothic one, two stories high, with broad cornice, and some dormer windows in the roof. It has a porch across the front with handsome pillars for support, up which run the glossy ivy, and the sweet-scented honeysuckle, each trying to outrun its neighbor through the securing leathern loops, and over the curving archways. The house is painted white, with pea-green window-blinds. The blue-grass plot in front is always green. In passing the beautiful shrubs and flowers on either side, you must stop and view them for a moment, or surely you will feel in after years like one who has run through Paradise blindfolded. In mounting the broad bal-

lustered steps to the front porch, don't forget to brush your feet on the heavy mat you always encounter at the landing. Then walk across and pull the little brown bell-knob, when a lady with a face you must have sometimes seen in pictures, with great, loving, brown eyes, and locks frosting a little about her temples, will open the door, and, smilingly, welcome you. Or, perchance, it may be her eldest daughter, who is the exact counterpart of what her mother was twenty years ago. Walk in when invited, for you can never hope to find a more genial or happier household. Stay a month if you can spare the time, and when the thirty days are up the place will appear so home-like that you will feel like starting in anew for a longer visit.

CHAPTER XI.

So fickle are the fortunes of this world,
In hope or grief, parting are we always,
While the pathway of our poor little lives
Is beset and blurred by disappointments.

IN the voyage of Mrs. Vinton and Mr. Barring's friends from New York to Liverpool, there occurred only one incident worth relating. On the third day out, a report was circulated that a case of cholera had been developed since leaving New York. It proved to be that of a young Englishman named Summerville, who, having by talent and energy accumulated a few thousand dollars, was returning to the "Old Country," with a young wife, on a visit to the home of his youth. The report being confirmed that it was a genuine case of the Asiatic type, consternation among the passengers rose to fever heat, for they fully realized that in a ship-load of over seven hundred packed and huddled together between decks, and in the cabin, like ducks in a poultry shop, it would be almost impossible to prevent the spread of the disease. In less than twelve hours Summerville died in the arms of his devoted wife, who was inconsolable in her grief. The remains were, in a few hours, wrapped in canvass, heavily weighted, and consigned to the cold embrace of the ever-restless ocean. A short time thereafter, the young wife, exhausted by the strain upon her nervous system, was stricken by the disease. At this juncture, the passengers, many of them pale with excitement and fear, demanded of the captain that the patient should be taken from her berth, and moved to some place, from which the contagion would not be so likely to spread. Mrs. Summerville was taken to a room in the officers' quarters, on

the upper deck. Shortly afterwards, the ship's surgeon walked to the center of the cabin, in which there were about fifty ladies, and, after hesitating for a moment, spoke loudly and emphatically: "Ladies," said he, "the case of Mrs. Summerville is a desperate one; she is in great need of a female attendant in her spasms and delirium. Is there a lady present who will volunteer her services?"

For a minute there was not a word spoken. Every one sat enquiringly looking at each other, and mute as statues. Mrs. Vinton, remembering the sweet face of the little woman she had seen hanging on her husband's arm only twenty-four hours previously, and the distressing change which had been wrought in the condition of the poor sufferer within so short a time, and realizing her own nothingness and anguish of spirit, resolved, even at the sacrifice of her own life, to give aid and comfort to the afflicted lady, her sister in misery and heart-ache. Rising slowly from her seat, and advancing toward the physician, she said with decision:

"Doctor, I will volunteer; lead the way. I will follow."

Mrs. Sneider, the lady in whose charge Barring had placed Augusta, suddenly rushed to her side, and with nervous trepidation, besought Augusta not to take such a risk.

"You do not propose exposing yourself to this contagion, do you? If so, you will certainly catch the disease, and likely give it to us all. Let the doctor and the officers of the boat take care of the sick woman. What is it to you, anyhow, whether she lives or dies?"

"Mrs. Sneider," replied Augusta, "supposing it was yourself, instead of the heart-broken widow, thus stricken with the fell disease, would you think it human for this great crowd of women to sit here, with their hands folded, and leave you to be nursed by the ship's officers?"

"Oh," replied Mrs. Sneider, in confusion, "that would be a different case, for I have both friends and relatives on board; but this sick woman appears to have neither."

"So much more reason, then, that some one should befriend her; for the love of humanity should be deeper and

broader than attachment to friends and relatives. The soul that feels no compassion or sympathy for the distress of a stranger, is a stranger to the noblest instinct of human nature. It has been truly said that 'Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn.' The effect of man's inhumanity to woman is still more disastrous; but the climax is capped by woman's inhumanity to woman."

Mrs. Vinton then calmly moved out of the cabin, accompanied by the doctor, leaving Mrs. Sneider standing there, flushed and confused. Upon reaching the state-room, they found the sick lady in great distress, mentally and physically. Augusta immediately applied remedies which her experience and good sense suggested, in addition to those prescribed by the doctor. Especially did she resort to the use of ice, and rubbing the body to relieve cramps.

"Oh, let me die," exclaimed the poor sufferer. "Let me go to my husband. I have nothing left now to live for."

"Did your husband love you?" inquired Augusta, without looking up from her work.

"Yes, of course, he did."

"Did you love him?"

"Certainly, I did."

"Were you not jealous of him?"

"Why, no, indeed."

"And he had perfect confidence in you?"

"Certainly, he had."

"Are you sure he did not like some other one better than you?"

"Lord, how you do talk, woman!" exclaimed the patient, sitting up in bed, and staring wildly at her nurse. "What strange questions you do ask! What put such notions in your head? Where did you ever learn anything about myself and husband? Where did you come from, anyhow? Who are you, and what induced you to come here to wait on me?"

"I came to nurse you because you are a woman and in need of help. My name is Augusta Vinton. I came from

San Francisco, California, and I am going to London, England."

Those abrupt, unexpected questions and answers accomplished the purpose for which they were intended; namely, to divert the mind of Mrs. Summerville from the gloomy, fear-stricken, death-dealing thoughts, which had taken possession of her; and before being fully aware of the design of her kind tormentor, she was out of danger.

By the great care and attention of the surgeon, with the bravery and example of Augusta, the scare subsided, and with it the contagion. From that date, Mrs. Vinton was the heroine of the voyage. Mrs. Sneider acknowledged her indebtedness and declared that she was a brave, good woman.

On the arrival of the vessel at Liverpool, Mrs. Vinton traveled direct to London, thence to a suburban town, where she found Mr. Barring's relatives, just as described by him. Here she remained some weeks secluded, but kindly treated. She received a Virginia City paper sent by Mr. Barring, one day, announcing that Vernon Vinton, of that place, had obtained a divorce, in accordance with the forms of law, from his wife Augusta Vinton, on the ground of "wilful desertion." After reading the notice, she calmly said: "It was just what I expected. I could hardly have hoped for anything better. That my conduct has been censurable there is no question; and although forced by circumstances to take the course which I have, yet, had it to be done over again, with the lights and shades now before me, how differently would I act! How different when viewed prospectively, life and duty appear from what they do when looking back from a prominent angle on the weary journey!"

One evening, a few weeks later, Barring stepped into the house, unannounced, to the great surprise and pleasure of all its inmates. Augusta could not do otherwise than receive him cordially. The first few days after his arrival were spent principally in calls and excursions, in company with Augusta and a sister of his. They were together one evening, after

the family greetings and surprises were over. Barring, full of the spirit of his design, approached Mrs. Vinton boldly:

"Augusta," said he, "at last every obstacle to our union has been removed—not, of course, according to our own choosing; it has come about in a way apparently providential. Now, if you will name the date, I shall have a minister ready to complete our happiness."

"Mr. Barring, I doubt the propriety of a union between us, now, or at any future time. To be candid and plain, I have never been in love with you, and, I firmly believe that our natures and dispositions are so different, that harmony and happiness will be almost impossible. The union of two natures, without understanding each other, is one of the problems of life. It is the most serious of all risks. Until we know the dispositions, tastes and temperaments of one and the other, I am in favor of a little delay, before we resolve to become man and wife."

Mr. Barring became very excited when he heard these remarks, and with difficulty kept his temper under control.

"Augusta, I am sorry to hear you talk this way. I had reason to presume that your coming over to England, at my suggestion, and, in so doing, turning your back on all friends and relatives, insured a successful termination of my suit, since all obstacles to our union have been removed."

"Mr. Barring," rejoined Augusta, "you well remember that our understanding, upon parting in San Francisco, was that I should come over here for a visit, and at the same time get away from my troubles; that you should furnish me the necessary funds for the trip, which I was to return to you, without interest, whenever it should suit my convenience, and that I should be entirely free to act independently in all matters pertaining to my future welfare."

"Very true, Augusta," replied Barring, perceiving that he had more than a match in arguing this question and consequently desired to turn the matter gently; "I would not throw any obstacle in the way of your pleasure. But it is enough to make a fellow despondent the remainder of his

natural life to travel nearly half the circuit of the globe to claim a fair one's hand, and find the joyful conception turned in a moment into moonshine. If such is your wish, I will leave England to-morrow, never again to intrude my person into your unwilling presence. I do not wish to be considered impertinent, nor disposed to dog your steps, when your displeasure is incurred in so doing. I may have done wrong in advising you to come here. The reason I did so was because I loved you, and desired to do all that was possible to relieve you from the embarrassment and mental anxiety in which I found you before you left San Francisco. Having somehow been the innocent cause of the difficulty between yourself and your husband, it was but natural that I should feel a deep interest in your true welfare. I know no better way of serving you than by laying all that I have and am at your feet, with a vow to love and cherish you with manly devotion. A few days must be the extent of my visit here, for business requires my return to California. As you are well aware, it will be improper for you to return with me, without first becoming my wife. The tongue of slander is already on our track, with nostrils extended wider than those of a bloodhound on the trail of an escaped slave. If you remain here among strangers, what can you do? Should you return without first becoming my wife, where can you go? The embarrassments and misery under which you left were as joy to what will greet you when you reach San Francisco. With my wealth, love, and a strong protecting arm, you can defy them all, and at the same time move in what is generally considered good society in the Golden State—that which money makes and money moves. Will you not consent to be my wife, Augusta? Refusing me you will certainly have the sweet satisfaction—if such it may be termed—of being a free woman, and a homeless wanderer, without substance of hope, other than to do menial work for a living. As my wife, you shall have a villa of your own, and of your own choosing, with coaches and horses and a score of servants, if you wish them. Your life shall be as

calm and as bright as a morning sunbeam. What do you say, Augusta? Is mine a forlorn hope? All our acquaintances expect us to return as one; and if it be not so, a doubt of honor will follow us thereafter forever. A lady, good and sincere, said, upon my leaving: 'Of course, you will bring Augusta back your wife. In fact, there is nothing else that you can do to save yourself from shame.' Shall I return, and tell them that you refused to be my wife? If I should spread such a report, though true as gospel, nobody would believe me. They would say: 'You lie like Tarquin. You won Augusta by your heartless wiles, shipped her to Europe, in your confidence, and now, like an uncharitable dog, have deserted her, leaving a stain upon a dear, good name.' And how else could I reply but tell the truth again. But the story would be so improbable that your friends would take me up and perhaps hang me for an ingrate and a liar. Now, Augusta, if you have no mercy on yourself, pray extend a little sympathy on my wretched case. You may call this declaration fresh and inopportune; but believing that the time has come when I should speak in this way, and feeling that my peace of mind would be much more secure, I make this open declaration, not doubting your indulgence."

At this Augusta laughed outright, and laying her hand in his, she said:

"Mr. Barring, I give it you, with all the heart that I have left; and if you do me half the favor you have promised, we may be happy yet."

A few soft warm embraces and they parted for the night.

The saloon-keeper was much elated at his success, saying to a confidential friend, the following day:

"You see, I set my heart on this woman, some years since. Our acquaintance was a romantic one. It was in a stage-coach, bound from Sacramento to Virginia City. There were no other passengers abroad; and there I sat, for one full day, looking in her face. She talked freely; and by varied converse I struck so many chords in the mechanism of her mind that I soon had each note and tone of the instru-

ment at my fingers' ends. In fact, I learned her so by heart that ere we reached our journey's end, I knew each thought and hope, and wish, and the size of every marrow-bone in her sweet body. I discovered that she loved display and dress, with jewelry for a passion. Only give me access to a woman of this kind, and I will wager all my wealth that I can win her from the sweetest home and dearest loves in all the world. It is a shabby saying, and may have some exceptions; but the rule is good, that 'every fellow has his price.' The avaricious man will sell his honor for a placer nugget, while others want a mint of money in the bargain. Ambition to swim high up in the filthy pool of politics is so enchanting that the moral wrecks of once-honored men fester in its tainted atmosphere like decaying fish beached by the tides; while, for the consideration of lust and appetite-sating condiments, poor human nature sinks so low in the scale of virtue, that the brute races which roam the forest would perish from the earth should they follow such examples. These things all considered, is there any wonder that I, who read men and women as other men read books, have the power to mould and shape the life and acts of any given creature according to my liking? So, you see, success with me was well assured when first I laid my scheming network to capture this fair bird. Inch by inch I crawled toward her, like a serpent in the grass; and as advance was made, my charming eye was always open, my purse-strings always untied. And, when in company with her, my greatest thought was to please and win, and cover up my heart's intent. In this, poor Vinton helped me out—first, by innocently shoving his woman in my way; then afterward giving us his jealous eye. 'All is well that ends well.' To-morrow we will start for France, and in the gay capital of that country I shall give Augusta my final vow to love and cherish her, with a mental reservation for some plumper duck when she grows old and dry. There we cannot help but have a honeymoon, after which, we will return to the western World, taking in many towns and cities, with much dalliance on the way."

In accordance with this plan, the betrothed couple, in company with a few friends who were spoiling for a social trip, left London for Paris, where, in a quiet way, through the officiating instrumentality of an American clergyman of note, who happened to be stopping at the Hotel de Ville, the twain were made one.

Upon the arrival of the news in California, the *Evening Bulletin* of this city contained the following notice:

"Married, in Paris, France, September 25th, 1862, Mrs. Augusta Vinton to Fritz Barring, all of Virginia City, Nevada."

After a few months spent on the continent, in pleasure-seeking, Mr. Barring, with his new wife, returned to this coast. During their absence, Vernon Vinton had taken to himself, for a second wife, a charming and accomplished girl by the name of Augusta Attwood, in face and figure very much resembling his first Augusta. With her he took up his permanent abode "where Southern vines are dressed," and not very far from where the murmuring waters of the Pacific wash the shores of San Pedro Bay.

Mr. Barring, after settling up his business in Virgina City, settled permanently in a beautiful village not more than a hundred miles from San Francisco. The house is inexpensive, but neat, with a little flower-garden in front, tilled by careful hands. But within there is no happiness. The threshold crossed, one feels like when in the midst of fading autumn roses, in which something of the form and fragrance of an earlier season is left. In the expression and features of that once charming woman may be plainly read "A disappointed life." The inharmonious nature and dissipated habits of her husband, in conjunction with the troubles of her earlier marriage, has withered up a life which, under favorable circumstances, would have filled a home with joy and contentment.

The daughter by her first husband, under her grandfather's roof and care, has grown to womanhood; and should you meet the girl she will be known by her sunny smile, round face, with dimples in her cheeks, and dark, arching eyebrows.

CONCLUSION.

Dear reader, it is with regret that we reveal this sad picture. It is the universal rule among writers of fiction to leave their heroines either great or happy—most generally in a condition indicated by the two combined; while ours being a true story, we cannot do otherwise than chronicle the facts as they have occurred. We have written the chapters which you have read so patiently, more for their moral and intellectual influence than for the simple narrative therein contained. Our chief aim has been to delineate character in a way to force a comparison between the beautiful and the good, and those prone to evil continually. The world is full of pits and quagmires, into which the unwary are continually falling. Hence, it is a blunder and a crime to feed the confiding soul with the conception that life, in its vexatious pathway, is banked about with roses. Neither was it so intended; for, had it been ordained that the earth should be a Paradise, and every temporal want and wish supplied, without an effort, what would there be worth living for? Without a field in which to labor in well-doing what could have been the purpose in the make-up of creation? Mankind would have been an idle, easy-going herd of voluptuous gluttons, without end or aim. There is innate in every nature a germ of truth and hope, which, like a seed planted in the earth, may be developed after its kind. As the conditions of soil and climate affect the plant, so do moral and intellectual influences affect spiritual growth. Those who are sufficiently strong, morally and intellectually, to set worthy examples, and live up to them, are the mile-stones in the highway of life, by which the weak are directed and encouraged. Conscious duty is often surrounded with embarrassments; but the almost inevitable result, in the end, is honor and peace, both of mind an-

conscience. The noble example of William Siddon and Belle Blanding fully illustrates what integrity, courage and purpose can accomplish. Although difficulties and embarrassments thickened about them until they stood in the shadow of despair, nevertheless, they did not for a moment lose sight of the dignity and beauty of that higher life which lifts the true heart above and beyond adverse circumstances. If our story, by the lessons of humanity and charity which it teaches, has a tendency to encourage contentment, and at the same time inspire a disposition to emulate the graces and virtues of our Kentucky friend, the chief purpose of this little work will have been accomplished.

MARY MORTON;

OR,

THE RESULT OF A FASHIONABLE EDUCATION.

CHAPTER I.

Towns and cities are the works of man,
Built out of bricks and mortar;
But God formed the blooming country
Out of his Omnipotence.

MANY years ago, not a great way from the evening shadow of the old Butte Mountains which rise high above the oak-dotted plain of Sutter county, seemingly designed by the Great Ordainer as sentinels to guard from harm the Valley of the Sacramento, there lived an old farmer, his good wife, two sons and a daughter. The farm consisted of two hundred acres of arable land, fairly improved, with a small indebtedness hanging over it. At the time of which we write Edward and John were eighteen and fourteen years old respectively, stout, hardy, well-behaved and industrious. The girl, Mary, had just celebrated her sixteenth birthday. With a form so perfectly and exquisitely moulded by nature, and developed by out-door exercises and household duties, she looked, when motionless, like a picture which one views with mingled feelings of wonder and admiration, and then returns and seeks it out again to see if his senses are not deceived. Mr. Morton and his life-companion were justly proud of their children. The good farmer, with the aid of his trusty sons, made the farm sustaining, while the mother, busied about her routine duties, felt the hallowed influence of a lovely

soul so near her, that often, as she expressed it, she seemed like one whose ears ceased not to hear the nightingale's melody, mingled with sweet words of filial love and duty. A good district school had brought the children forward in their studies beyond the common average secured in rural life.

A few miles distant, there lived one Ernest Burk, with his widowed mother and a little sister, on a farm, left half paid for by his dying father a year before. The young man's majority had just been reached; and upon his broad shoulders he felt the weight of great responsibility. Incessant labor had allowed him less of culture than the Mortons. Conscious of this defect, night lamps were used to push him up in line with those having better opportunities. "So long as I have hopes of gaining her," said he, as he left the plowhold for the noontide meal, "I feel that no task is difficult. The image of my soul is Mary Morton. With her love, the strong arm of a man bent on duty and a better condition of things, mentally, morally and socially, all else appears easy."

"Mr. Burk," said Mary Morton one Sabbath evening, "This is my friend, Miss Minton, from Sacramento, who has come to spend a few days with us. We shall learn many things of the city during her stay, and I hope, Mr. Burk, you will be with us, at least, every evening."

Ernest bowed, and with some embarrassment, said: "I am happy to know you, Miss Minton, and hope your visit to our beautiful county may be a pleasant one."

"Beautiful!" exclaimed Miss Minton, with a scornful curve of the lips, "I see nothing beautiful about it unless you call sere fields and unpainted houses beautiful. In Sacramento City, everybody has a nice garden, a neat house, and sidewalks on which to promenade, instead of, as here, tramping through the dirt, along the unworked highway, without shade trees or playing fountains to soothe and sustain us on a hot summer day like this."

"With such culture, exquisite taste, and comprehension of the eternal fitness of things as you possess," said Burk,

with a shadow of sarcasm in his voice, "it is evident your stay with us will be anything but in harmony with your conception of the sublime and beautiful."

"You flatter me," said she, not perceiving the irony of his tone and words.

"Not designedly," said Burk, "but we must expect, coming as you do from the gay and festive City of the Plain, that our country home and uncouth manners will, of course, grate harshly on your more refined nature."

"Indeed! your compliments are charming, Mr. Burk. Had you the advantages of our Sacramento youth, you might become quite an exquisite."

"What is your definition of an exquisite, Miss Minton?"

"Law sakes, don't you know? It is—it is—well, it is one who is always neatly dressed, with small boots and shining hat; one glove off and the other glove on; a downy mustache, and crimped hair parted in the middle, with soft, smooth words, full of compliment and repartee, always leaking out."

"Pray, Miss Minton," replied Burk, with a feigned look of wonder, "will you please to more fully explain the nature of this creature? Is it of the biped or quadruped order?"

At this Miss Minton laughed outright, and, with a wink at Mary, said: "You are indeed unschooled in the fascinations of the city. An exquisite is a man like you, only more refined."

"Then," replied Burk, "if refinement produces such creatures as you have described, I prefer to live without the polish of your town. Having my choring to do, please excuse me ladies; I bid you good evening."

"Is that the man the boys were bothering you about a dinner?"

"Yes, I guess so," said Mary, with a tell-tale blush.

"Ah, I see through it all," said Miss Minton, "you are in love with him. Why, he is a rough, uncouth fellow, who doesn't know enough of manners to hold his hat in his hand while talking to ladies."

"The sun was shining very hot," suggested Mary, and it would have been very unpleasant."

"What of that? A gentleman should be a gentleman if it killed him."

"But a gentleman in exquisite manner is not always a gentleman in fact," retorted Mary, with some feeling. Your kid-gloved gentry of Sacramento may be more formal and distressingly polite, but Ernest Burk had never a superior in every element that constitutes a true gentleman."

"Mrs. Morton," said Miss Minton, one evening, a week after the foregoing, "I think you had better send Mary to the seminary at Sacramento for a year or two. She will never learn anything out here worth knowing. She is a bright, lovely girl, and, if properly polished, would make a shining ornament of society."

"We would rather have her as she is—a shining ornament at home," replied Mr. Morton. "Nevertheless, I feel that Mary is defective in many elements essential to a complete English education, and would like, if there was a college near by, to have her attend for a time."

"Yes, and she should learn music, drawing and French—especially French," replied Miss Minton, with emphasis on the last words.

"Drawing is properly a branch of an English education; music is a desirable accomplishment; but French usually leaves the ordinary boarding-school subject about as vain and useless as a church weathercock."

"Well," replied Miss Minton, with much color and a little pique in her voice, "evidently you do not appreciate my advantages in that direction, Mr. Morton."

"Not having seen them, evidently, I do not."

"Well, then, am I to understand from your language that my finer accomplishments had as well be hid under a bushel while out here, because they will not be comprehended or appreciated?"

"No, no; be not so hasty in your opinion," replied Mr. Morton, "of our ability to appreciate your accomplishments;

for every accomplishment, of whatever kind or nature, if properly imparted, tends to elevate and purify the mind; and while we may not be able to follow you in your French recitations, nevertheless, a polished mind, supported by a pure and upright heart, strains not to control the mental pearl drops which continually fall from such lips like the light and glory of the sun, the source of which we do not understand. We feel the presence of a polished and superior mind, without knowing whence its power; but, in our admiration of superior culture, we often fix the seal of excellence above the mark of intrinsic merit."

"Well," said Mrs. Morton to her liege lord, the next morning after this conversation. "What do you think of the proposition to send our girl to boarding school? While it will be hard for me to part with her cheerful face and ever-ready hands, I feel that we really owe her better advantages than she has yet received."

"Truly," replied Mr. Morton, "I fully agree with you; but whether or not the boarding-schools of Sacramento are just the kind to train a girl in the way she should go, is a more difficult question to determine. If Miss Minton is a fair sample of their product I really think Mary would be better off at home."

"But," rejoined Mrs. Morton, "Mary's natural disposition and tendencies are altogether different from those of Ella Minton, therefore the same educational bearings and influences would never make our girl the giddy, exquisite creature that Ella is."

"It may be so," said Mr. Morton; "but my study and observation of human nature constrains me to the opinion that it is never safe to trust a child subject to influences, the drift of which we do not approve; for as surely as the incessant falling of little drops of water upon the adamantine rocks make their impress, so surely are the most perfect natures warped and perverted by words and acts, apparently trivial in themselves when taken separately, yet in their continual use, the aggregate makes its influence felt in the ratio of the impressibility of the subject."

"Well, my dear," interrupted Mrs. Morton, "your disquisition of abstract propositions appears to me irrelevant to the subject under consideration. The question is, shall we or not send Mary off to school? I have no particular preference for Sacramento schools, but presume that they are as good as any in the country—not such, it is true, as we attended forty years ago. The world moves, and, to keep up with the times, the schools, like everything else, inculcate ideas and ways of life which we never dreamed of in our youth; but because new ideas, new customs and new ways prevail in this age, we should not condemn them simply because they are new to us. What if the girls do wear feathers, frills, furbelows, kid gloves, high-heeled shoes, and silk stockings, frizzle up their hair like frights, promenade the streets and flirt a little, are not the young men of the town and the colleges more objectionable still, saturated as they usually are with vanity, beer and tobacco, together with many other objectionable habits too numerous to mention?"

"I offer no excuse for laxity in deportment or improper conduct on the part of either young men or young women," replied Mr. Morton. "I admit all you have said relative to the vices of young men—save a few noble exceptions—living, or educated, in the large towns and cities; but, in this direction, have the young women similarly situated any advantage over their male consorts? If not, then there is evidently improper training and influences at work, which, if not checked, will ultimately destroy all regard for the common proprieties of life and the duties and responsibilities which they entail."

"There you go again," said Mrs. Morton, with a smile; "pray leave off your philosophy, and let us talk about sending Mary to school. Miss Minton's wonderful faculty of address and charming manner makes Mary's defects in these accomplishments more painfully apparent, and hence I am more impressed than ever with the necessity of sending her off for a year at least."

"Well, well," said Mr. Morton, thoughtfully, "if you have made up your mind to that effect, there is no use of our discussing the question longer, for you know it is said that a 'woman convinced against her will is of the same opinion still.' We shall have," continued Mr. Morton, "as the result of our labor for the present year, about five hundred dollars, after settling all expenses. This amount I had designed to pay on the mortgage which is hanging over the farm. However, I think the Colusa Bank can be put off another twelve months. In that case we will take the money and send the girl off to school, hoping always for the best."

* * * * *

"Mr. Burk," said Miss Minton, as the three sat on a rude bench under a spreading oak tree in the yard, one afternoon, "Mamie is going home with me to-morrow, and will attend the Seminary school in Sacramento at least a year before returning."

"Mamie!—what?" said he, with evident surprise.

"You appear to be very dull of comprehension, Mr. Burk," continued Miss Minton. "To speak plainly, in your homely country language, I mean to say that Mary Morton is going to Sacramento with me to-morrow, and will be gone a whole year attending boarding school. Do you understand that?"

"Yes," said Burk, "but I am very much surprised to hear the news. How is it, Mary? Is it true?" Their eyes met, and there was an earnest, troubled meaning in his expression which she fully comprehended.

"Yes, it is so," answered Mary, with a tremor in her voice which told plainly how deeply she felt on the subject; "my mother has so willed it and I must go."

"Must go, child!" chimed in Miss Minton, "you speak as if it was a hardship and a sorrow to leave the old ranch, with its incessant drudgery and dirt."

"Well," replied Mary, "with all its homely features, it is the only home I have ever known. Here I have lived from infancy with those I love. In the spring-time I have roamed

the fields and woodlands over so often with my brothers, in quest of berries and wild flowers, that I know and love every tree and shrub, nook and corner, in all the country. For every sere day of Autumn we have a multitude of spring flowers to compensate; and if I could always have those I love about me I would be content to dwell here forever."

"Good," rejoined Miss Minton, with a hacking laugh, "you are quite romantic. When schooled in the art by reading numerous authors I could name, coupled with a few years of city polish, and hereafter visit this backwoods country, you will certainly astonish the natives and be surprised at the way your loves and attachments shall have been weaned from this homely uncouth place."

"Miss Minton," said Mrs. Morton, sticking her head out of the door, "will you please come into the house and direct the packing of Mary's trunk, as I am not very well skilled in the art?

"With pleasure," replied the boarding-school belle, and forthwith went about the work.

When the door closed behind her retreating form, Ernest Burk realized that his time had come to reveal the secrets of his heart, or run a fearful risk of losing all hopeful opportunity. He was sufficiently wise to comprehend that with new ideas of life, new associates and influences, Mary Morton, after having lived in Sacramento one or more years at a fashionable boarding-school, would most likely be a very different girl in disposition and sentiment from the one at present by his side. Rising from his seat and laying his hand upon her arm, he said: "Mary, come, let us take a walk a little way down the path which leads to the brook, where we have so often wandered in our rambles? It may be the last time I shall ever have the pleasure of your company on an afternoon tramp, for it is difficult to tell what changes a year spent in the gay world at Sacramento may bring forth."

Without a word she arose and walked by his side down the winding path which led to the little rivulet. Onward they went in silence, each apparently busy with thoughts that

could find no expression in words. When they had reached a bench of the hill, overlooking the country below and beyond, Burk suddenly stopped.

"This," said he, "is the point from which we have so often admired the landscape stretching out to the south and west in one unbroken plain, save where the green willows indicate the winding stream. Why are you so demure and silent, Mary? Your voice has rang out so many bugle notes from beneath the shady boughs of this noble overhanging oak that I fear the place will lose its charms for me when you are gone. Please once more sing for me, as of yore, some sweet prevision which the moment may inspire."

Seating herself on the trunk of a fallen tree she remained for some moments in silence, gazing westerly, where the great half horizon-hidden orb of day was sending out his last rosy signals to tinge with glory the fleecy clouds that seemed to revel in the warm summer light. Finally she improvised and sang the following lines:

"Oh! my country home, to leave thee,
To leave the dear ones here,
To part from friends, it grieves me;
It starts the silent tear.

Farewell, the new-mown meadows,
With stacks and burnished sheaves;
Farewell, my forest shadows,
With your dropping autumn leaves!

Farewell, brave oak and alders,
And my crystal running stream,
Which forever onward chatters,
Like moving pearl-drops in a dream!

Farewell, my childhood pleasures!
Farewell, my budding rose.
Farewell, my toy-like treasures.
My sweet and calm repose."

"Ah, me, how simple I am," said she, while brushing the glistening tears from her eyes, "to feel so deeply the leaving home and those I love, but for a short time."

"Your attachment for home is only natural," replied Burk, "and I do not wonder at your indisposition to leave it; but, Mary," said he, taking her hand in his, while his dark, lustrous eyes and handsome, sunburnt face clearly indicated the fearful struggle raging around his heart, "I beg your pardon for my earnest manner; but did I not speak, I feel as if the fire within my soul would consume me. I realize how near I stand upon the brink of an abyss in which there is neither light nor hope. In our childhood plays of keeping house, our evening songs and school-day rambles, I have ever felt a strange joy while in your presence, which I could not fathom in my boyish fancy. Daylight is broken in my heart. The mist has cleared away from my clouded vision. Now I know what means this thirsty longing which of late has robbed me of my rest. I cannot keep the secret longer. Do not start, or go off in a swoon. Surely, ere this, you have guessed it? At all events, the confession must come out before you leave this place. It is my last opportunity. I love you, Mary! I have loved you all these years, and can never love you less, or shake your image from my heart. Say, may I hope to call you mine, or am I lost? Speak encouraging words, or let me sink forever out of sight, and in unbroken silence corrode my soul away."

"You may hope," she said; "for every word which you have uttered, finds an echo in my foolish heart."

For a moment her head rested on his shoulder, with his manly arms around her waist, while she brushed away the happy tears with her flowing golden hair.

"At last I have found you, you little rogue!" shouted Miss Minton, as she came down the hill, out of breath. "Why did you run off at such a time? Your mamma and I have been two blessed hours packing your trunk, and my lady out here love-making. You must learn more propriety than running around through the woods after country timber. Your beauty and amiable qualities will soon secure something better than a pine-knot."

So sudden and unexpected was her appearance, that the lovers, in their embarrassment, hardly realized the purport

of her speech. Nevertheless, Ernest Burk felt that a slur had been cast upon him; but disdaining a reply to such insinuations, he walked along in silence on their return to the house, while Miss Minton chided and chattered all the way. Reaching the front gate, Burk bowed the ladies a good evening. When he had taken a few steps, Mary said, "Ernest." Going up and putting her little brown hand in his, while her deep, liquid blue eyes looked him full in the face, she continued: "You will come over in the morning and see us off, won't you?"

"If I live." Then raising his hat and bowing again, he was soon out of sight.

"You little ninnie!" said Miss Minton, with vexation. "You make as much of that green, uncouth fellow as if he was worthy of consideration. Soon you will learn to laugh at such awkward rustics."

"Never!" replied Mary, with emphasis. "Rough diamonds, it is true, should be polished to show their brilliancy; but rough diamonds are rare nevertheless, and when once found are not lightly cast aside, or exchanged for puff balls."

Always as good as his word, Ernest Burk was on hand at the early hour appointed for the departure of the young ladies.

"Burk," said Mr. Morton, "my harness and spring wagon are considerably dilapidated in consequence of the runaway we had last week, so if you will loan me yours to take the girls to town I shall be under obligations to you?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Burk, "and the horse, too, if desirable."

"Thank you; but in case of using your entire rig I think you had better do the driving."

To this arrangement Mr. Burk assented when convinced that it was agreeable all round. After placing in the back end of the conveyance two trunks, three bandboxes, two cloaks, a lunch basket and some flowers, the appointed driver took his seat between the young ladies and started off.

The morning was bright and pleasant. The shadows of the spreading oak trees, which had been stretched out since the sun went down the evening before, were slowly crawling up toward the parent stem for a noon-tide repose, and the birds sang merrily in the over-hanging boughs. The fields were yellow, for the golden harvest had felt the teeth of the chattering sickle, and was piled about in shocks and stacks, while the kings of farm-machinery were being set at long intervals with their great jaws sufficiently open to gulp down an average crop in a few hours. Occasionally was passed a herd of cattle browsing on short pastures, where the season's last representatives of the dandelion and wild poppy families were struggling with the parching earth for development. Human habitations were often separated by miles of space, and, wherever observed, with but few exceptions, they were found to be constructed of shakes or rough redwood boards, with little appearance of comfort or home-like surroundings. As the noble steed sped onward, the grand panorama of nature ever changing before them, even Miss Minton appeared oblivious of the occasional clouds of dust which arose from the road. Thus diverted and chatting gaily, the trio had passed over more than two-thirds of the distance to Colusa, when, driving through a brushy undergrowth section depressed below the common level of the plain, a highwayman suddenly sprang out into the road, and, grabbing the horse's bit with one hand, held a revolver threateningly in the other, and demanded all the money and other valuables of the party. At this juncture Miss Minton screamed and tried to faint. Mary took the matter more coolly, but was nevertheless much frightened, while Burk, after fastening the brake tightly, and assuring the ladies of their personal safety, said:

"Well, sir, you want our money and other valuables, do you?"

"Yes; and be quick about it," growled the road-agent.

"You're a bold fellow to undertake robbery in broad daylight. I think you had better let us go, and when these

ladies are safe out of the scrape I will come back, and we'll have the fun all to ourselves."

"That's too thin, young man! Pungle, without further words, or I'll blow you through. The best and safest time to rob a man is when he is with a lot of women, for they are such natural cowards, and are so afraid they will get hurt, that no resistance in such cases is ever offered. So give up your coin or I'll send you all to eternity in one minute," said he, leveling his repeater at the heads of his victims.

"Certainly," said Burk, "we will give up everything rather than be shot."

"Yes, everything," chimed in Miss Minton, handing her purse over to Burk, who at the same moment pulled out his own, and, turning to Mary asked for hers.

"All I have is in my trunk," replied Mary.

"In what part?"

"Near the left hand end, down at the bottom."

"Then give me the key and I will get it for the robber. Take the lines, Mary, hold them tightly and don't be frightened."

"Now," said Burk, addressing the highwayman, who had heard all the conversation above related, "don't shoot, but come with me round to the back end of the wagon and I will get you Mary's wallet, which is well filled, I am sure; for she is on her way to Sacramento with a year's supply of board and school money."

Burk's manner and words appeared so natural to the highwayman that he was thrown off his guard. Letting go the bridle he moved to the rear of the vehicle. Burk let down the tail board, and squaring the trunk, unlocked it, and throwing back the lid proceeded to lift out the middle partition, holding it in both hands by the straps prepared for the purpose.

"Now, Mr. Road-agent," said Burk, "while I hold fast to these fancy things in order to keep them out of the dirt, will you please reach over on the left-hand side of the trunk, where you will find the money."

The robber, feeling fully assured that everything was lovely, did as directed; but the "saratoga" being quite a large one, it was found no easy matter to reach its bottom. In order to do so, the road-agent placed his pistol hand on the wagon-bed for support and stood on tiptoe. This was the critical moment Burk had planned and was anxiously waiting for. In an instant he dropped his charge; by the time it had reached the ground, the prone pistol was knocked from the robber's hand, and, with a well directed blow, he was doubled up in the road. Pouncing on him with the celerity of a cat, Burk, with the light rope which he found in his coat pocket, had the fellow bound hand and foot before he had fairly recovered from the blow. Not having room in his wagon to convey his prize into town, he took the leather check from his bridle, and dragging the pleading villain to an adjacent tree, lashed him standing upright, close and secure. Tearing a blank leaf from his memorandum-book he wrote: "This fellow attempted to rob two women, but was foiled in his purpose by Ernest Burk." This he pinned on the shirt-front, and placed the pistol in the robber's belt. Then, turning, picked up the soiled finery, with the exclamation. "Well, Mary, I guess I have ruined your collars and cuffs and finishing furbelows."

"Oh, Ernest, you are a brave fellow, anyhow. You saved my money and I don't care if those frills are dirty. I can wash them, and they will be as good as ever."

Miss Minton, who had been moaning and half hysterical during the affray, finally recovered her composure and was lavish in her compliments for the nerve and courage displayed by Burk in the trying ordeal through which he had passed.

The remainder of the journey to Colusa was without further mishap.

"Now," said Burk, coming up and addressing Mary, while Miss Minton was conversing with a new acquaintance at some distance, "everything is in readiness for your departure. Here are the checks for your baggage." Taking

hold of her hands, he continued: "A year will pass before I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again, and there are so many vicissitudes in this life, that there is no telling what a year may bring forth. I shall miss you, Mary, very much; your seat will be empty at the little chapel. The organ will give out no more sweet melodies, for other hands will be on the keys than those I love. The spreading oak at the brow of the hill, where we have held such sweet converse, will afford only a dismal shadow of its former self. The running waters of the brook below will no longer murmur music to my heart. In your absence the fields will appear bleak and sunburnt; the groves damp and sour; the flowers cease to grow because your voice and warbling songs will no longer be heard mingling with that of the birds, putting them to shame for want of greater melody. The coming year to me will be like seed sown with hope in the earth. By faith and work I will nurture them, hoping for their future increase."

"Ernest," she replied, while her soulful eyes, dripping, told of greater depths, "be content—if I am a jewel so precious to your heart as your words would indicate, remember that it is but in the rough; when polished by knowledge and refining ways, will not your appreciation be increased?"

"Verily, but the finder of a diamond in the rough may knows its value, and in that state control it, but when polished by a master-hand, the world discovers all its beauty, and rivals for its possession multiply a thousand-fold. But, good-bye. I have already detained you too long. May love and peace be with you always!"

CHAPTER II.

How generous is the thoughtful hand,
That covers up the gloomy future
And feeds the thirsting heart on hope!

"WIFE, here is a letter from Mary, I presume," said Mr. Morton, as he stepped into the house one morning on his return from town. "Please read. It has been more than a month since we heard from the girl, and I am anxious to know how she is getting along."

Mrs. Morton opened the letter and read:

SACRAMENTO, May 10th, 1861.

"DEAR MOTHER:—It has been something over nine months since I left home. During the first few weeks I was very home-sick, and really disgusted with the formalities and precise etiquette of the school. For a time the city girls giggled at my awkward, country ways, which often sent me to my room sobbing; but it is all over now, and I don't ask of them any odds, either in deportment or study. The rules of the school are not very strictly enforced, so the girls have plenty of latitude. We are allowed a promenade every fine afternoon, accompanied by one or more of the teachers; but they don't seem to have forgotten that they were once girls themselves, and, consequently, are not disposed to see everything that is going on in our rambles.

"The annual commencement exercises will occur on the fifteenth of next month, and I have been designated to sing a song and recite a piece, but have nothing fit to wear on such an occasion. My dresses look old-fashioned and dowdy, when compared to the lovely cut and material in which my companions are enrobed. I have been out shopping and to the milliner's and find that I can get a nice tarletan dress made up in the latest style, with a train, (which is all the rage down here,) for sixty dollars. The dress is all that I shall really need, with the exception of a

pair of white kid-gloves, satin slippers, half a dozen handkerchiefs, some hose and a few hair-rats. The cost of the whole outfit will not exceed seventy-five dollars. Now, dear mamma, please have pa send the money right away, for I have only a month to get my outfit in readiness for the all-important occasion."

"Seventy-five dollars for a rig in which to speak a piece and sing a song!" exclaimed Mr. Morton. "Why, my good wife, you remember that we furnished the girl with a hundred-dollar wardrobe when she left home, and supposed that amount of clothing would be sufficient to carry her through the present term, at least. She wants seventy-five dollars, eh? Why, I haven't seventy-five cents; neither do I know where to get it."

"It is pretty steep, I must confess," replied Mrs. Morton, "but then the girl must have some kind of an outfit for the occasion. She will evidently be mortified and unhappy if compelled to appear among her stylish school-mates indifferently dressed. Therefore, we must endeavor to send her the amount required."

"Well," rejoined Mr. Morton, "it will be three months before we can realize anything from this year's crop. The only property I have which will sell at present is 'Lady Blanco,' just in with a fine calf. Neighbor Morris offered me eighty dollars for her this morning, but it is not more than two-thirds of her real value."

"Nevertheless, you had better let her go, and we will endeavor to get along on the products of the young cow and old 'Pied,' until we can do better."

"Very well," replied Mr. Morton, "I have always felt disposed to yield to your counsel in all matters affecting Mary's welfare, and will not run counter to it in this emergency. 'Lady Blanco' must go. I am sure the girl," he continued thoughtfully, "will acquit herself creditably in any rôle she may assume; and my greatest regret is that our stinted means and want of leisure will not allow us to attend the commencement exercises at Sacramento, where we could hear

the examinations, and witness Mary's progress. We shall, before many years, have a railroad running through this section of the country, which will be a great relief from the expense and tedium of a hundred miles of staging and wagon now necessary to reach the Capital City."

* * * * *

"Do not forget," said Mrs. Morton to her husband while at dinner, one day, about the twentieth of June, "that Mary will be up from Sacramento this afternoon. She will arrive in Colusa about four o'clock, where you will have to meet her with the team and bring her home."

"Then I must be going soon, for it will take three hours to drive down," replied Mr. Morton, as he arose from the table.

After disposing of the load of hay left on the wagon, when dinner was announced, the old gentleman hitched the horses to his shaky spring wagon and started off to town, without much regard to personal appearance. Upon his arrival Mr. Morton learned that the stage was in and that Mary occupied a chair in the hotel sitting-room. Without ceremony he pushed his way into the inn where he found his daughter in company with the landlady and several of the guests.

The greeting between father and child was cordial, but with evident embarrassment on Mary's part. After a few compliments from Mr. Morton as to the girl's personal appearance, the two, bidding the company a good-afternoon, mounted the wagon and started toward home.

When they had fairly cleared the town, Mr. Morton, taking the lines in his right hand, and putting his left arm around the girl, said: "Well, Mary, I am really glad that you have come home; we have been very lonely without you, and it appears an age since you left. We have missed your cheerful face and willing hands. Even the birds appear to have deserted the old oak in the yard since you went away; so we have had no music but that of the bleating lambs and the chatter of the busy reaper. Your good mother has

borne up bravely, but is very much exhausted by the overwork which has fallen upon her, in consequence of your absence. The boys appear lost without you, and Ernest Burk," he continued, with a twinkle in his eye, while he gave his daughter a poke with his finger in the side, "has been over to our house every blessed Sunday since you left, to inquire if we had received any news during the previous week."

"How is he getting along?" she inquired.

"Getting along! Why, he is out-stripping everyone in the neighborhood. He has, by almost superhuman efforts, paid off nearly all of the mortgage his father left hanging over the place."

"Has he been to school any since I left?" inquired Mary.

"No," replied Mr. Morton, "he appears bent on relieving the ranch of its corroding mortgage before even taking a day's recreation. Nothing but the severest storms of last winter were sufficient to keep him in-doors, and even then his time was occupied in mending old harness or fitting up something about the house or stable. He has got the farm in splendid condition, and all the fences in good repair; but with all his work, pine knots and tallow dips suffered during the long winter nights, while he appeared to consume the substance of newspapers, periodicals, and that of his school books. He has usually taken his mother and sister to church on Sunday mornings, but the afternoons finds him in communion with his studies."

If he has confined himself so closely to farm work, without the refining influences of society, he must be rough in manner and more uncouth than ever," replied Mary, thoughtfully.

"That may be so," rejoined Mr. Morton; "but he is evidently made of the stuff which ultimately develops superior men; and although somewhat awkward and diffident, like the rough diamond in the hands of the lapidary, the labor of dressing is of but little consequence, so long as no flaws in the stone are revealed."

Upon arriving at the house, Mary found her mother and brothers in expectation of her coming, all ready with open arms to receive her. That evening was a happy one at the Morton homestead. Her parents and brothers seemed to vie with each other in their attentions to the truly beautiful girl, just turning into her eighteenth year, in form full, with features regular and exquisitely moulded.

The rose and lily were struggling for mastery in her cheeks and dimpled chin. Her little mouth seemed bent on preserving its decorum, while the good nature and roguishness which sat in its turned-up corners were continually trying to pry open her ruby-colored lips, as if to show the even pearl rows of teeth which looked as if they were anxious to bite something in pure sport. Her pure Grecian nose sat composedly between large, liquid blue eyes, as if placed there to prevent a contagion which their too free association would have engendered. Her long eyelashes indicated they had been made to shade eyes in dreamland, while her arched eyebrows kept guard. Her full, smooth, fair, womanly forehead was skirted by a rippling flow of golden ringlets which fell in showers about her swan-like neck. The tan and sunburn of the farm had disappeared from her face and hands, by her in-door life; so that, in fact, she appeared a fit subject for a painter's brush

> Wherein imagination runs riot
> In pursuing curving lines and new forms.

Next morning after Mary's arrival, as Burk was passing the house with his team and a load of wood, Mr. Morton sung out: "Hitch your horses, Ernest, and come in for a minute. Our girl has returned from Sacramento."

Mr. Burk, with some embarrassment, endeavored to excuse himself on the ground of having on his working clothes, and therefore not in a proper attire to be presented; but the old gentleman would not hear any such excuse; for the young man's father had been a dear friend of his, the families having always been very intimate. Such a thing as standing on ceremony or etiquette was out of the question.

So Mr. Morton almost pulled Burk into the house. Mary did not at first recognize him; it was but a moment, however, before she extended her hand and gave a cordial greeting. Nevertheless, his knowledge of human nature enabled him to read her thoughts, which evidently indicated surprise not mingled with mortification. 'Tis true that she often met him in a similar garb, and took it as a matter of course; but the contrast between his appearance and that of the young men of her acquaintance in Sacramento was striking and painful.

He felt that he had made a mistake in making such an uncouth call. Nevertheless, he could not help gazing in undisguised admiration at the beautiful creature before him. After the interchange of a few words of friendly greeting, Ernest withdrew, biting his lips, fully conscious of the blunder he had made.

* * * * *

"That will do," soliloquized Burk, as he threw down the sponge on the Sunday morning following Mary Morton's return home from school; "the wagon looks as well as I can get it without a new coat of paint. 'Tis true it isn't as fine a rig as I could wish, but it is the best that I can do. Mary has evidently had, within the last year, inculcated ideas of elegance in equipage transcending the reality of a half-worn spring wagon. Nevertheless, I am sure her good sense has not departed, and with that she cannot reasonably expect to see city rigs in country places like this.

Hitching up the splendid black farm-horse with his shiny coat glistening in the morning sunlight, and, after donning his new Kentucky Jean suit, which his mother had just finished from the loom, Burk mounted his wagon and drove rapidly over to the Morton homestead, where he found the family getting ready for church. He invited Mary to ride with him, which, after some hesitation and a little urging on the part of her mother, she consented to do; but Ernest Burk's keen perception observed the shadow of reluctance which passed over the girl's face as she mounted the wagon

Their conversation on the road to town was disjointed and spasmodic. She complained of the hot sun, of the rough and dusty roads; even the woodland had, in a measure, lost its charm for her.

"I thought," said she, "when I left home less than a year ago, that this was the dearest and most beautiful country in the world; but since I have seen the lower Sacramento Valley, with its beautiful city nestling among shade trees, shrubbery and sparkling fountains, my inspiration for rural life has waned apace."

"Possibly, your love for the country and its associations may return should you remain at home some years," suggested Burk.

"Possibly so," Miss Morton replied, "but I have no thought of remaining at home longer than a fortnight or two. It will require another full year to complete my studies up to a graduating point."

"Then you propose returning to Sacramento?" inquired Burk, with evident surprise and disappointment.

"Yes, certainly," she replied; "that is, provided I can induce my parents to consent. Now, Mr. Burk," said she, turning her large blue eyes full in his face, "you can help me in this matter, for I know you have great influence with my father, and I desire so much to attend school another year. By that time I shall have my diploma, and be in every way competent to teach school, which is the height of my ambition."

"The height of your ambition to be a school teacher!" exclaimed Burk, with some feeling, "why, I thought you proposed to settle down and be a farmer's wife, when your education was completed."

She flushed up a little at this, and appeared nervous under Burk's scrutinizing gaze.

"Well," said she, recovering her composure, "it will be time enough for me to think of becoming a farmer's wife when school days are over, and I have had a test of school teaching; besides, I never fully realized the drudgery of the

farm until my return from Sacramento. But," she continued, as if to change the subject, "you have not yet consented to use your influence in my behalf relative to the matter nearest my heart; can I depend upon you, Ernest?"

Burk felt that the jewel he had so long prized was slipping from him; and now to be called upon to aid in the severance, which he felt convinced another year's sojourn in Sacramento would accomplish, was a bitter task to undertake; yet his love for the girl prompted him to say he would certainly do nothing to discourage her parents in the gratification of her wishes.

After the morning services in the little church were over, and while they were leaving, a nicely dressed, genteel looking young man, carrying a small cane, kid gloves on, with light hair parted in the middle, edged his way through the crowd, and coming up to Miss Morton, greeted her familiarly, which she cordially returned. She introduced him to Mr. Burk and her parents as "Mr. Darling, a friend from Sacramento."

"How comes it you are away out here in this wild country, so far from home?" inquired Mary.

"Well, you see," said he, while he twirled his cane around his fingers, "being allowed a week's vacation, and having nothing else to do, I concluded to run up here and see your beautiful country. Arriving on the stage this morning, and understanding that you and your parents would most likely be in attendance at church, I came here, hoping to meet you, with the happiest result."

"If you will go home with us and accept our indifferent hospitality," said Mr. Morton, "we shall be pleased to have your company."

"With the greatest pleasure," returned Mr. Darling, with a bow, "I shall be delighted beyond measure, for I have heard so much of your beautiful home and its surroundings from the eloquent lips of your charming daughter, that I esteem the privilege of viewing all this beauty with my own eyes, as one of the most gushing pleasures of my life."

"Mr. Burk, have you room in your wagon for the gentleman?" inquired Mr. Morton; "if not, he can ride with madam and I."

"Of course, we can *make* room for him," replied Burk, with the air of a martyr being led to his own funeral pyre.

So the three young people approached Burk's conveyance, and, while he was unhitching the horse, Mr. Darling, with the greatest ease and grace, assisted Mary into the wagon, and then seated himself upon her left, while the young farmer took his position upon her right as driver.

Mary and Mr. Darling were, during the drive home, wholly absorbed on topics relating to the seminary, its occupants, and Sacramento society in general, almost forgetting Burk's presence, until a short turn in the road, a deep rut and a gust of wind sent the light dust flying like a cloud about them.

"Is this a part of the joys of country life, about which I have heard you discourse so eloquently, Miss Morton?" jeeringly exclaimed Mr. Darling.

"I never so fully appreciated the disagreeableness of a hot, dusty, rutty road; and I can't say there is anything lovely or joyful in it," replied Mary, in manner and tone fully evincing her mortification.

"With the exception of yourself," rejoined Mr. Darling, pleasantly.

Mary's blushes were distinguishable through the dust, as she stammered out something about flattery.

"Young man," said Mr. Darling, addressing Burk for the first time since leaving town, "will you please let me drive awhile? I think I understand the business better than you."

Without a word Burk handed the dude his lines, when the city expert gave the high-mettled horse a fearful whip-cut, with the exclamation, "Get out of this dust, you dog!" In a moment the horse was on a dead run.

Before Burk could recover the lines the wagon's near wheel, in the rapid flight, struck a boulder on the roadside, which sent the wheel spinning in the air. The effort to recover his

balance caused Darling to lose his hold on the lines, which dropped to the ground.

Burk realized the peril of the situation, and while Darling was clinging with both hands to the seat, and in great fright yelling piteously for help, Burk left his seat like a flash, and crawling over the dash-board and along the shafts of the wagon, managed to reach the bridle reins in time to stop the horse, just as he was leaving the road for the thick woods which bordered it on either side.

When Darling realized that his carcass was safe from harm he exclaimed: "Bravo for you, my country lad; you deserve a shilling for your efforts."

By an effort Burk restrained a hot reply to this insulting speech. But when Darling continued, "I did not think the horse would act the fool so completely, or I should not have struck him," Burk replied:

"With proper treatment the horse is perfectly safe."

"Farmer boy, by this language do you mean to convey the impression that I have not sufficient comprehension to properly manage a horse?"

"Place your own construction on my language, Mr. Darling; the trouble appears to be that you never had an original thought since you were born."

The city expert discovered, from Burk's indignant tone and manner, that he had run against a snag that would brook no further nonsense, and he, in consequence, subsided.

Mary sat pale and motionless, having retained her position with a great effort. When Burk resumed his seat and started the frightened horse homeward, she slipped her arm into his, while an expression of security and composure settled over her anxious face.

Not another word was uttered until they reached the Morton homestead, when Burk alighted, and, lifting Mary tenderly from the wagon, inquired if she was hurt.

"No," she replied, "only frightened out of my wits by the peril experienced; we owe everything to you, Ernest,

for our almost miraculous escape from death or becoming confirmed cripples."

Mary insisted on Burk's remaining and taking dinner with them; but, excusing himself on the ground of having promised his mother, before leaving in the morning, that he would return and dine with her, mounted his seat, and, raising his hat, with a low bow to Mary and Mr. Darling, drove rapidly in the direction of home.

Mr. Darling remained with the Morton family over night and for breakfast next morning, when he departed with many gracious bows and acknowledgments for the cordial welcome and generous hospitality which he had received; then he and one of the young Mortons started off with the team towards town. The old gentleman, his wife and daughter, stood in the doorway watching their departure.

"Well," exclaimed Mr. Morton, "if I know anything of human nature, that young man from Sacramento is like a comely vase, with a bunch of flowers stuck in the top of it—beautiful and nicely crowned, but remarkable only for its breadth of emptiness within. In manner, deportment and a few stereotyped speeches he evidently possesses a certain kind of polish, but it is about as thick and unsubstantial as the Sunday morning's polish on my boots."

"Well, pa, your opinion is greatly at variance with that of the best society people of Sacramento," retorted Mary, with evident feeling at this indifferent analysis of Mr. Darling's amiable qualities.

"My opinion at variance with that of the best society people of Sacramento!" replied Mr. Morton, in measured terms. "Will you please tell us what constitutes the best society people in Sacramento, to whom you refer as having expressed an opinion relative to the qualities of this young man?"

"Well," said Mary hesitatingly, and after clearing her throat several times, "I have heard some of the teachers at the seminary and several of the young ladies of the institution, and some of their young friends present during our

receptions and examinations, say that Mr. Darling was unexceptionable in his deportment and address."

"What have you heard your teachers say complimentary to the manly qualities of Mr. Darling?"

"Well," replied Mary, "I heard the music-teacher say only last week that Mr. Darling was very mannerly and genteel in appearance."

"Have I not said as much in his favor?" rejoined Mr. Morton. "I acknowledged to having discovered a degree of polish and good manners; but at the same time I doubted the depth of his sincerity, and the value of his understanding. While the opinions of your schoolmates and their young friends may constitute the best embyro society people of the town; yet, before my own impressions can be influenced in this matter something more tangible and substantial than the noon-day dreams of boarding-school misses will have to be produced. Nevertheless, I may do Mr. Darling injustice in giving voice to my impressions."

"Yes," returned Mary, "I think you do, and as to 'the noon-day dreams' of the seminary girls, I can assure you they are not indulged in to any considerable extent. The advanced classes are the most practical and lady-like girls I ever knew. I am always improved and instructed when in their presence; and, pa, if I can get your consent to spend another year at the seminary I will be able to convince you upon my return that there is something more substantial and utilitarian taught than noon-day dreams. The Principal says that one year, with diligent study, will set me forward so much that I can graduate at the next commencement—a consummation which, I think, would make me supremely happy the remainder of my days. Now, dear pa!" she continued, throwing her arms around his neck, "will you not let me go this one time more?"

Mr. Morton pressed his lips to the girl's forehead, while his arms encircled her form, but the longed-for word was not uttered.

"Say, father, say, may I go?" she entreated.

"Well, Mary," said he, "nothing would give me greater pleasure than to grant your request, if I could, in justice to your mother and myself, spare the money necessary to defray the expense; but, I am afraid, that with the debt already hanging over the farm, any additions to it would ultimately cause the loss of the homestead."

"Well," interrupted Mrs. Morton, "if we can properly educate and settle our children, I feel that our work in this life will be well finished; hence, I am in favor of the girl having her way in this matter, although the expense will undoubtedly cramp us severely."

"I shall be able to teach school and earn some money to help you, when I get through with my studies," suggested Mary.

"Very well," said Mr. Morton. "I see that you and your mother have made up your minds that it must be so. I will therefore yield with the best possible grace. It will be more than a month before we can realize anything from the present crop; but, in the meantime, I will go to town and endeavor to borrow a hundred dollars additional to the amount already due the bank, and see if I can get accrued interest added to the principal, all to run for another year; for the crop is so poor and the prices so low that we shall not be able to realize more than enough to pay off our blacksmith and store bills, and furnish sufficient to carry Mary through the school year."

By the tenth of July all necessary arrangements had been made in the way of funds and outfit for Mary's return to school, where it was proposed she should remain until the following June commencement, when it was anticipated she would be able to graduate.

Ernest Burk had seen but little of Mary during her few weeks stay at home. It being the busiest part of the harvest season, his time during the week days was wholly occupied. He had spent a couple of Sunday afternoons at the Morton homestead, and had several chats with Mary in a general way; but no specific mention or understanding as to their

relations or ultimate prospects were approached. The morning of Mary's departure, Burk was present, and volunteered to take the young lady and her trunk into town, and see her safely started for Sacramento.

Mr. Morton appeared much gratified at this proposition, and accepted it for Mary before she had time to object, even had she been so inclined.

Parting kisses being over, Mary's trunk was placed in the back end of the spring wagon, and Burk helped the girl to her seat; then taking his position by her side, as driver, started up the Morton bay into a jogging trot, while Mary, looking back, kissed her hand to her mother, and then taking out her handkerchief, waved it to her parents and brothers, who stood at the gate watching, with their hearts full of love and kindness for the departing light of the household.

Mary appeared to be in high spirits at the prospect of soon seeing her Sacramento friends and pleasant schoolmates, so she conversed glibly and pleasantly, as the wagon rolled along, of the Garden City, its pleasant groves and walks, and dripping fountains; of the broad, deep river and floating palaces which moved like things of life upon the waters; of the churches, the towering Capitol, and the halls of legislation, where the assembled wisdom of the State meet annually to discuss grave questions, and where newly-fledged orators soared above rational conception, intermingled with the noise and din of derision. Burk, busy with his own thoughts, spoke but little, until a turn in the road revealed the town at some distance. Realizing that there was only a few moments left for action, he felt like a lone mariner

> Driven by the gale upon a rock-bound coast;
> A shift of canvas, and a turn of keel, or all is lost.

"Well, Mary," he broke in, abruptly, at a pause in her glib speech, "you propose to be absent a whole year without returning, even for a visit, do you not?"

"Not quite a year, Mr. Burk. This is the tenth of July, and the commencement exercises will take place near the tenth of June next, making the period of my absence only about eleven months."

"Even that will appear an age to us who have lived upon the light of your countenance."

"Well, Mr. Burk," she replied playfully, "such food is altogether too ethereal for mortal subsistence, and I would advise you to live on bread and potatoes during my absence."

"I shall be content and happy to do so, if I can be assured that they will be seasoned with your love."

"My love must be considered cheap, indeed," she replied, "if you would take it to season your dinner with."

"In your disposition to tantalize, Mary, you take my words in their literal sense, when you know such a construc- is foreign to my purpose. I feel constrained," he continued, "to hear from your own lips whether or not you have forgotten our mutual confessions and pledges made in the shadow of the old oak, under the hill, one year since."

"No, Mr. Burk, I have not forgotten the occasion; but, of late, I have tried to persuade myself that it was only an illusion, where two unsophisticated creatures were disposed to make love, simply because of their utter isolation and loneliness. I hope you will not take it to heart. It will soon wear off, like the measles. Nevertheless, I must acknowledge the highest esteem for you, and am sure that you are worthy of my love, or that of any other young lady in the land; but remember I am merely a school-girl, with a year's study to occupy my attention, before I can afford to think of love and marriage. Indeed," she continued, "I don't think I shall have any disposition in that direction for several years to come, for, upon getting through with my studies, I propose to teach school, in order to help my parents, and make a little money for myself; besides, there is no fun in being a farmer's wife, which is simply another name for a life drudge, whose province it is to labor without rest or appreciation."

"It occurs to me," said Burk, in a husky voice, "your conceptions of life have changed very much in the last year, and with a like change for another year, you will have lost all your attachment for your early associations and childhood home."

"No, never!" she exclaimed, "I may lose something of my rural fancies of love in a farm cottage, with six children and half-a-dozen hired men to cook for; but I shall ever cherish the dear old home, and the loved ones about its hearth-stone who have striven so earnestly to make my condition better than their own."

Further conversation was cut off by their entry into Colusa. The stage being in waiting, Mary was at once handed in, and the trunk strapped on to the boot. As the driver gathered up the lines for the start, Mary reached her arm out at the stage door, and grasping Burk's extended hand, said in a low musical tone, "Hope and persevere always, but don't fret." In a few moments the lumbering stage had rolled out of sight.

Burk stood as if riveted to the spot. The hotel-keeper observing him, approached and said, "What is the matter with you, young man? Don't fret; the girl will come back again, and if she don't there never was a fish caught out of the sea but there was a finer one left. Come and have a drink."

This speech aroused Burk, who, excusing himself, mounted the wagon and started towards home. "'Hope and persevere always, but don't fret,' he ejaculated to himself. What did she mean by that? Was it designed to encourage my suit, or was it for the consolation I shall find in hoping and well doing. At any rate, those words will do to live by, and I here, alone, with my soul in communion with God, make a solemn vow, to live and die by them. Life was designed for something better than pining and fretting about things over which we have no control. He who can tread continuously along the line of duty, neither moving to the right or to the left, conscious of the rectitude of every act, with courage, and faith, and hope, and charity, need not fret about consequences. Life is a reality, with its serious duties and responsibilities. My mother and my sister are left to me. I have a fair amount of brains, I believe. I have health and strength and a start in the world, and if I don't carve out a name for myself, it will be my own fault. I'll try it. 'Hope and persevere always, but don't fret.'"

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CHAPTER III.

'Tis a nobler thing to live uprightly,
With faith, and conscious duties all performed;
To such an one the grave's approaches
Seemeth but repose, before the coming day.

THE second year of Mary Morton's absence at school wrought but little change in the usual routine duties of her father's household. It is true the incessant toil and pinching economy, with consequent cares and anxieties, which it was necessary to practice in order to "make both ends meet," were evidently making their indellible impress upon the features and forms of Mr. and Mrs. Morton. Their shoulders were becoming more rounded, their steps less firm, and the once golden tresses of the good wife and mother hung about her temples like the first-falling snowflakes upon the sear and yellow grasses of Autumn, betokening the storms of Winter near at hand. The old gentleman's long white locks were thinning on his crown, and those remaining appeared to be seeking shelter beneath the collar of his ample coat.

Two lives which a quarter century's communion had blended into one, were in all things agreed; for when there was a difference, joint concession, like two currents meeting and mingling into one, produced quiet and peace. Christians they were like those of the olden time, who worshipped God within a tree-shade, or shakes and unhewn logs for a sanctuary. Conscious duty they followed unerringly, and the consolation found in their purity of life and well-doing built the altar at which they daily worshipped. The boys, on their young and vigorous shoulders, carried the weight and responsibility of more mature years. Attending the district school whenever the labors of the farm would permit, they had made

fair progress in their studies, at the same time cheering and sustaining their parents.

For a time after Mary Morton's return to school, Ernest Burk drooped in spirit. He instinctively sought seclusion. The woodland and the babbling brook often found him Sunday afternoons in communion with them, his companion a book of travel, or a history filled with the lore of past ages. Every week day found him engaged at his arduous duties on the farm. His crop was at last gathered, sacked and hauled to the landing, where he sold it for more than sufficient to pay off the remaining portion of the old mortgage that had for so many years hung like an incubus over the farm. Returning home from town one evening he placed upon the table some papers and a sack of money.

"There, mother," said he, "is the old mortgage cancelled. Every outstanding obligation is paid, and a thousand dollars in cash left. To your industry, economy and encouragement, mother, we are indebted for this good fortune; two hundred acres of excellent land, well stocked and well fenced, with a thousand dollars in cash left. We will use it in making our home pleasant and comfortable. The stick chimney must come down and a brick one take its place; for the old cloth-ceiling and paper walls, lath and plaster must be substituted. The garret shall be turned into a second story, with a broad cornice; then we will have the house painted white with pea-green window-blinds. Then a new yard fence; and a decent stable must take the place of the old rookery which has served us as a make-shift for so many years. A garden shall be laid out, directed by your own dear self, wherein we will plant the most choice shrubs and flowers procurable. What do you think of the proposition, mother?" said he, putting his arms about her neck.

Mrs. Burk had, since the death of her husband, centered her hopes in the boy, and afforded him every aid and encouragement in all his endeavors. On the particular evening of which we write she was supremely happy in the consciousness of having reared a son who had dared every hardship

for his mother, and now stood there the ideal of her conceptions of a man, intellectually and morally. And to know that he, by industry, economy and indomitable will-power, had cleared the farm of an encumbrance which, at the death of his father, was considered a hopeless task, and, in addition thereto, had brought home the first clear money of the farm, laying it in her hands, that improvements necessary to her comfort might be made, filled her heart with a joy that is vouchsafed to no one but a mother. Laying her hand upon his shoulder and looking up into his honest sunburnt face, she exclaimed:

"Well done, my son. A thousand times am I repaid for all my endeavors in your behalf. My prayers have been answered. It shall be as you have willed it."

A carpenter and mason were employed, and, with Burk's assistance, the improvements were all complete before Christmas.

Occasional letters were received from Mary Morton by her parents during her stay at Sacramento. She spoke encouragingly of the progress being made in her studies, and entertained hopes of graduating at the head of the class. She wrote much about the social entertainments given at the school, of her pleasant walks and drives, and gay associates; of the church service and her singing in the choir of which Mr. Darling was a valuable member, winding up her last letter in April, with the following words:

"The commencement exercises will take place about the tenth of June, and I will be compelled to have a new outfit. All the graduating class are going to wear white Swiss muslin dresses, elaborately flounced and trimmed with lace, and having a long train. The cost of the suit, including necessary underwear, gloves, ribbons, slippers and silk stockings, will be about $75. I know very well that pa is not able to furnish the money necessary to secure this outfit, but what can I do without it? To appear upon the stage among the graduating class, dressed in bad taste and differently from the others, would provoke remark and criticisms which

would embarrass me beyond endurance. Moreover, the order of the Principal of the school is that all the girls of the graduating class shall be dressed just alike, and as I previously described. So, dear ma, you see how it is. You will have to induce pa to send me the requisite amount, or else I shall be ridiculed and snubbed on every hand."

When Mrs. Morton read this letter to her husband he sighed deeply, and then exclaimed: "Another seventy-five dollar outfit for a few hour's show! This seminary is called a model institution of learning!—one presumedly to fit girls for the practical duties of life!--nevertheless, tending to imbue them with conceptions of display and consequent vanity, which ruins a hundred where it makes or improves one! May the devil take such schools! Instead of teaching habits of economy and lessons of simplicity in dress, the French *modiste* has to be employed to prepare the trailing rigs for school-girls costing $75 each, when 'bit' tarleton, made up by the girls themselves, would be of more intrinsic value to them and to posterity than all the frills and furbelows of the French nation! But, since we made the mistake of sending the girl to such a place, I suppose we will have to conform to the rules of this vanity-puffed institution until we can get her home. Mr. Burk wants the big bay to make up another team for summer fallowing. He has offered me $100 for the horse. I don't see how we can run the ranch without him; still he must go to appease the monster, fashion."

During the three day's examination just previous to the commencement exercises, Mr. Darling was a regular attendant at the Seminary. His exquisite dress and graceful manner had made him a general favorite among the girls, a number of whom exhibited considerable rivalry to see who should secure the greater part of his attentions and compliments.

Mary Morton, without any apparent effort, caused Mr. Darling to move and stop at her bidding. So evidently was he in love with her that the girls nick-named him "Mary's Darling." Her blushes on such occasions indicated that she was not indifferent to his attention.

In the afternoon of the third day of the examination, Miss Morton, having creditably completed the course required of her, was dismissed with many congratulations. With the compliments of others, she received those of Mr. Darling, who was profuse in his expressions of admiration of the manner in which she had acquitted herself. She appeared a little weary, but very happy in the consciousness of having passed the ordeal in a manner fully equal to the expectations of her friends and teachers.

Mr. Darling, observing her tired look, gently slipping his arm in hers, said: "Come, Miss Mary, walk in the garden with me; it is so pleasant and refreshing this afternoon, that I am sure you will feel benefitted by so doing."

She indicated her assent, and the two passed out of a side door into the garden. After passing leisurely up and down one of the main walks a few times, they mechanically entered a narrow pathway overhanging with shrubs and flowers, which led to a little vine-clad summer house, situated in a secluded part of the garden. The sun was hanging in the tree-tops which lined the streets to the westward, with his slanting rays shimmering through the ivy and honeysuckle vines that were climbing the sides and roof of the rustic arbor. Mr. Darling, pinched off a beautiful variegtaed pink which was peeping in at the door, and placing it under the band which held back the girl's flowing hair, said:

"Wear that, please, for the remainder of the afternoon in remembrance of me; for the time is so near at hand when we must part, perhaps forever, that every thought of yours which can centre on my unworthy self makes me supremely happy."

She smiled pleasantly at this little sentimental speech, and replied: "Do not flatter me, Mr. Darling. I presume a few days, or weeks, at most, will suffice to efface my existence from your memory."

"If your image," he rejoined, "is ever effaced from my memory, it will be only when my reason shall have left me,

and my heart is turned to stone. In the gay society in which I have moved for the last five years, I have showered compliments on many beautiful young ladies of Sacramento City, and sometimes, perhaps, have spoken some words of love, but they were simply superficial expression, without depth of sentiment. Like a lone wanderer along a pathway strewn with rare flowers and rich perfume, my outward senses have enjoyed the enchanting ramble. But the fountain of my affections and true devotion has been running to waste, like a rivulet of pure waters lost in a desert. For these many years have I been looking in vain for an undiscovered idol, at whose feet to cast my devotion, and forever worship at the shrine of Love. Something more than a year since I imagined that I had caught sight of a tangible existence, in which my conception of a perfect ideal was centered. Nearer approaches, time and opportunity of social intercourse, have fully confirmed my first impressions. I am in love for the first time. I need hardly tell you, Miss Morton, that your image is mirrored in all my thoughts, and that it is to you I look for life and hope, as we look to the sun for light and heat. I beg a thousand pardons for this abrupt declaration; but I feel that should this opportunity be lost, another so favorable would possibly never be offered. Can I hope for your love?" he continued, kneeling before her, and grasping both her fair hands in his. "Say, at least, that I may hope, though it may be as distant and as faint as the music of the spheres."

Mary Morton was very much agitated at this unexpected speech, and her drooping eyelids were fringed with tear-drops, as she replied: "While my heart prompts me to say that your hope is not in vain, my better judgment tells me that the current of our lives have run in such adverse grooves that the attraction of a common lot and mutual love would hardly suffice to oil down the asperities grown out of antecedent pathways. Besides, I cannot think of marriage now, for I must assist my parents, who have exhausted their substance to make my condition better than their own."

"Your heart prompts you to say that I may hope. So I will; the rest is easy. Whatever may have been the difference in the current of our lives, thus far, it matters not. God hath so ordained that the mountain torrent and the placid stream find peace and harmony when commingled with the waters of the silver lake. And so it is with two devoted hearts mingled into one upon the ocean of a boundless love. Plants of adverse climes often grow and prosper side by side, entwining their boughs and flowers over the same garden wall; so with two souls devoted to each other's welfare. The oil of joy continually softens and wears away all minor differences.

"As to your parents, they shall never want. I have a good round salary, the half of which I will willingly give for their support. With the other half and you to spend it for me, I shall be supremely happy. Say, now, dearest, the simple word Yes, and leave the rest to me."

"Destiny," she replied, "appears to have so ordained that it shall be as you will it. Come weal, come woe, in every phase of joy or sorrow, I will follow wherever you go."

He folded his arms about her with a fervent press, and implanted a kiss on the sweetest lips, to him, in the world.

CHAPTER IV.

THE mechanism of the human mind
Is built out of so many gossamer threads,
By a hand than them more mysterious,
That the stoutest philosopher stands appalled
In the contemplation of a single thought.

THE commencement exercises at the Seminary passed off pleasantly and satisfactorily to all parties concerned. Mr. Morton, for the first time, had journeyed to Sacramento in order to be present to witness the examination and closing exercises. At their close the lady Principal approached Mr. Morton, and after seating him in the little school library, said: "How are you pleased with the exercises, Mr. Morton?"

"Everything has passed off well enough, and apparantly to the satisfaction of everyone."

"Do you not think your daughter has improved wonderfully since she has been with us?"

"In the matter of books and a knowledge of the ways of the world she certainly has," was his reply.

"From your guarded language, Mr. Morton, I infer that you consider something yet lacking in Mary's education?"

"It may be," he rejoined, "that my conceptions as to what constitutes a complete education in this age of the world are obsolete, but somehow I have held to the notion that something more is wanting than graceful manners and mental discipline to fit our children for the actual duties of life. It would be all very well if they were to encounter nothing in their pathway but sunshine and flowers; but those of us grown gray in struggles for existence have learned from the dear lessons of experience that there are many adverse winds which cross the smooth current of the rose-

ter visions which young people too often indulge in; and we nk it the duty of those possessed of experience to incul- e such utilitarian lessons into the hearts and minds of our ›pring as will enable them to overcome every obstacle and hstand every temptation. The tendencies of our modern ıcational institutions are like unto the fable of the indul- ıt father who built a beautiful vessel, exquisitely carved l finished, with crimson sails and gaudy trappings. On s craft he placed his children amidst the applause and ıgratulations of his friends and neighbors. As the vessel ved out of the placid harbor in which she had been ored, with every sail set and streamers flying, blessings l God-speeds followed the joyful crew. For a time all nt well as they were wafted onward in the gentle breezes ting from the headlands. But soon the winds grew onger and finally ripened into a gale, when the vessel nt to pieces. Some of the crew perished, while others, ıging to the wreck with ruined hopes and fortunes, drifted ıore. When the wrecked vessel was inspected, in order, ›ossible to determine the cause of the disaster, she was nd constructed in a manner to give an elaborate and ıutiful external appearance, but devoid of strength, with- ; brace and beam or ribs of oak. It appears to me there similar errors to be found in our modern system of ıcation. The casual observer, who has no knowledge or ıcern about the practical duties of life, would most likely that the educational work which you are doing here is com- te in itself. But since it was your request that I should ›lain my qualified approval of your course, permit me to that, while I admire the mental and external polish of .r system, I think that the storms and vicissitudes of life calculated to wreck or ruin a greater proportion of the ıth of this generation than that of any other which has ceded it, for the reason that the braces and beams and ; of oak which give strength are growing weaker year by r in the constitutional elements of what we call educa- ı."

"I infer from the drift of your illustration and argument," replied the preceptress, "that you consider it necessary to mix the polish of education with more utilitarianism; that the higher grades of education, as now taught, are impracticable, and consequently superficial."

"I do not wish to be understood as declaring that because an education is impracticable it necessarily follows that it is superficial," replied Mr. Morton. "Many examples could be given to show that such a rule cannot be universally applied. In fact, the most profoundly educated book-worms are usually the most impracticable in all things pertaining to the duties and responsibilities of life."

"Then you would discountenance the higher grades of education because they are impracticable?"

"Not at all," said the old farmer, "I would simply mix in more of the practical with the theoretical."

"How shall we add this practical part of which you speak to our educational course? I keep a seminary of learning for the education of young ladies who are sent here for mental and moral culture. Will you please tell me, Mr. Morton, in what manner I can introduce the practical part of which you speak?"

At this moment dinner was announced, when Mr. Morton was escorted by the hostess to the dining-room, with the remark that they would renew the conversation at the first convenient opportunity.

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"In response to the interrogation which you propounded at the close of our late interview," commenced Mr. Morton, at the suggestion of the lady Principal, after all the guests had been served, "I will, as a preface of what I propose to say, disclaim any intention to reflect adversely on your particular system of instruction, for my observation leads me to conclude that yours is a high average school of its kind; and considering the present drift of the fashionable mind in matters relating to mental discipline and physical training, evidently the introduction of radical utilitarian ideas into

the course, would at present jeopardize the financial success of your enterprise. The years of a generation, at least, have passed since our educational institutions commenced drifting from the old time utilitarian conceptions and landmarks of our fathers; and as well might we expect to change the current of a deep and rapid river as to suddenly change the disposition and tendency of the age in its conceptions as to what constitutes a fashionable education. It is related of a once happy and prosperous people living on the borders of an inland sea, who, in their joyful pastimes and continual rounds of show and pleasure-seeking, did not observe that the turbid streams from the mountains were gradually but surely enveloping them in a flood of waters; and it was only when the tide had deluged the valleys and driven the inhabitants to the mountains, with the loss of many of the people, that they began to realize their pitiable and indefensible condition. So it is with us in the mental, moral and physical training of the age; and nothing short of serious social disorder, or perhaps national disaster, will enable us, as a people, to realize whither we are drifting. Forty years ago, book education, with its usual concomitants, was practical and utilitarian to a degree, which, at present, is not popular. Then the rareness of educated people made it possible for every one to secure a position financially commensurate to the talent and ability displayed. But under the present system of public and private educational facilities, when a complete course is within the reach of almost every one; and when the millions of our youth are availing themselves of said facilities, it becomes a more serious question as to what constitutes an education worthy of name. Now the trouble with our modern system of education is the conception inculcated into the mind of every girl and boy who has made any considerable advancement in the higher grades of learning, that he or she, as the case may be, has advanced beyond the pale of physical exertion and consequently impressed with the conviction that their education will enable them to live

on somebody else's labor. The result is, we have at least a dozen applicants for every position where mental action can be used as a substitute for physical labor. Hence the disposition of the young people of the country to drift to the towns and cities. Especially is this the case with those who have been educated from home in the more fashionable colleges and seminaries. In consequence of this mental deformity, which inculcates a desire to eke out a precarious living, as clerk, lackey, or even a hotel runner, is considered infinitely more desirable and respectable than to labor at some respectable calling. The result of this growing disposition to live without physical labor, is, towns and cities are being overrun with an irresponsible, dangerous element, causing the filling up of our jails, assignation houses and State prisons with theoretically-educated young men and women of this generation."

"We admit the evils of which you complain," interrupted the lady; "but will you please, Mr. Morton, answer directly the question propounded in the library, as to the remedy?"

"Well," he replied, "I am fully aware of the embarrassments which beset that question. Evidently the evils to which we have alluded are due in great part to the influences which surround our educational institutions, and as evidently to my mind is it that the influence and teachings which are to correct these false impressions of life and its duties must come, in great part, from the same source. But it is equally manifest that parents are in a measure to blame for the idle, demoralizing tendencies which are so common. Since most parents, in the towns and cities, at least, were educated in a way similar to that of their offspring of the present day, they are consequently not prepared to instil into young minds the dignity, importance and utility of practical lessons and love of labor. Therefore, we think, to the educators of this age belongs the chief responsibility of correcting the erroneous impressions of life heretofore so freely inculcated. There is a great deal of vanity in the world, and the tendency of our fashionable institutions for

learning it abnormally is surprising. Love of dress, and a disposition to create a sensation, is so strong naturally that the sentiment needs no special fostering; and every precaution should be taken to prevent a display of these qualities, especially in the school-room. The rich and gaudy apparel of a single student at a boarding-school is more demoralizing in its tendencies and tenfold more catching and dangerous than the small-pox. The display of a single gaudy dress or ribbon has led many a girl to ruin. The twirl of a little ivory-headed cane and a pair of kid gloves have turned many a sensible boy into an idiot for the remainder of his natural life. Habits of industry, economy and simplicity in dress inculcated at home and at school, are worth more than all the music and French in Christendom. Tidiness, practical experience in domestic economy, to encourage and dignify labor in the minds of school-girls and boys, will endure and bring forth fruit when superficial accomplishments shall have ceased to attract or please. Instead of giving all the premiums for proficiency in text-book lessons, neatness, simplicity of dress, correct deportment, order and system in the bed-room; the facility with which the sewing and crochet needles are used; in fact, everything tending to promote industry, economy and a practical knowledge of all things pertaining to useful lives, should be encouraged by tangible recognition."

"In the event of inaugurating the reforms in my schools, which you have indicated, Mr. Morton, I should be without pupils. The wealthy people, who patronize the school to a greater extent than any other class, do not desire their children taught house-keeping and washing dishes."

"Possibly you are correct in your apprehension that the most fashionable and wealthy portion of your pupils would be called home in the event of your making the changes suggested, for their mothers have most likely been educated in a fashionable way themselves, and consequently cannot comprehend the utility of the change; or else they married or have grown suddenly rich, and consequently have no

higher conception of wealth than the gaudy tinsel it will purchase. However, it is only the correctness of the principle and its utility which I am contending for, leaving extraneous circumstances to take care of themselves. That there should be uniformity and simplicity in school-girl dress and ornament, more practical lessons and utilitarian ideas inculcated, thereby inspiring love and respect for the commonest duties and responsibilities of life, I think you will concede."

"You are certainly correct in your ideas as to the missing links in our educational system, but I think parents are as much to blame for deficiencies as are the teachers. My own experience as an instructor has convinced me that it requires the earnest co-operation of both parent and teacher to properly direct the understanding and develop the moral, mental and physical nature of children sufficiently to insure success in the affairs of this world, and, at the same time, fit souls in eternity."

"I think we are perfectly agreed on that point," replied Mr. Morton. "To my mind," continued he, "a satisfactory system of educational training will not be inaugurated until the faultiness of the present system is more generally understood. There is no doubt that parents will ultimately come to this conclusion. In older civilizations, such as Germany, Scotland and France, they have already reached a point in the solution of this vexed question, which makes them, in great part, masters of the situation. Labor with them is honorable. Whether the child of a peasant or prince, practical experiences are developed in the educational facilities of these countries, which makes every young man or woman so educated, independent of position or legacies. One of the first essentials in this form is to have a good school within the reach of every home in the land, so that the child, after the day's instruction, shall return to the family hearth and be made to assist in the routine duties of the household."

* * * * *

The closing exercises of the seminary were well attended, many of the gay and fashionable people of Sacramento being present. The platform was festooned with the national ensign, and bedecked with many vases and bouquets of flowers. The graduating class, consisting of eight young ladies, ascended the platform. Their white fleecy robes richly laden with ribbons and flowers, trailing behind them like moving snow-banks. Mary Morton, the last to ascend, was, if anything, more lovely than the rest.

When seated, a prayer was offered up by the favorite minister of the town. Then came a song. Miss Minnie S—— read the salutatory address in a way that captivated her auditors. One after another the girls went through the trying ordeal with credit.

Mary Morton was the last called. She had been conceded the distinguished honor of reading the valedictory, prepared with great care and committed to memory. She fully realized that much was expected of her, and, being conscious of her own strength, engendered by hard mental discipline and incessant rehearsal, she felt equal to the occasion.

When her name was announced she deliberately arose, and advancing to the stage front, made a graceful bow. Then, straightening up her model form to its full height, with golden hair falling in showers of ringlets over her swan-like neck and shoulders. Her face was flushed, but its lines sat in such composure, that confusion blanched in wonder upon the confines of a rounded bosom. Her great, blue eyes held in their immortal depths a flame deep and pure, and, before her lips moved, the audience bent to catch the unspoken words.

Like a statute fixed in living colors, she stood. Her right hand held the ribbon-bound manuscript idly by her side. It was not the hesitancy which confusion brings, but a pause so natural in the hush of eloquent lips, that the divinity within us holds the heart-pulse still.

It was but for a moment. Then in measured tones and full pronunciation she proceeded with her work. The grave

and gay parts of her discourse fitted where they fell; and when the audience heard the music of her clear, ringing voice, playing upon well-rounded sentences and pathetic words, like harp-strings hung in the evening breeze, moistened eyes were seen, and deep murmurs of applause were heard on every side. Success crowned her efforts to the highest niche, and when the exercises were over, friends showered upon her compliments and kisses. Her father was delighted, while Mr. Darling stood by hugging himself in rapture.

The following morning all was confusion at the Seminary. The girls were hurrying to and fro through the rooms, packing their trunks, kissing schoolmates good-bye, and preparing for a general stampede. Several carriages and express wagons lined the curb, waiting for baggage and living freight. The up-country stage had driven around to the Seminary for Mr. Morton and his daughter. With the assistance of Mr. Darling, Mary's "saratoga" had been lifted up and securely strapped on to the stage boot. At this moment she reached the sidewalk, accompanied by her father. After having bid her teachers and schoolmates good-bye, Mr. Darling advanced to meet her. The lovers lingered near the gate while her father advanced to the stage door.

"Good-bye, Mr. Darling," said she, extending her hand, which he clasped in his; "when shall I see you again?"

"One month from this time," he replied, "I shall be at your father's house, and claim you for my own."

"I shall be rejoiced to see you at any time," she replied, "but we must not be so hasty about our union."

"Leave that to me," said he, "and all will be well."

At this they advanced to the stage door, Mr. Morton stepped in, while Darling pulled Mary to one side and gave her a kiss, which act did not escape the attention of her father.

"May," so-called by Mr. Darling and her schoolmates, was handed in by her lover, the door closed and the stage rolled away. Father and daughter were alone inside, while

an extra traveler sat up with the driver. For a time the two were silent, each busy with adverse thoughts. Mr. Morton was very much surprised to see the familiarity existing between Mr. Darling and his daughter, and, consequently, ill at ease. After the city with its towers and steeples had faded from view, Mr. Morton said:

"Mary, have you seen much of Mr. Darling during your stay at Sacramento?"

At this Mary started up with surprise, while she answered deliberately: "Yes, father, he has often been at the Seminary during the late session."

"You and he appear to be on very intimate terms, or at least I should judge so from what I observed just before you entered the stage."

Mary was silent and confused. Mr. Morton observed her demeanor closely, and became convinced that there was something serious at the bottom of the affair. "Mary," said he, "it is not well that you should undertake to hide anything relating to this matter; therefore, I would like to have you tell me plainly by what right Mr. Darling was allowed to kiss you so lovingly."

Mary fell upon her knees in the stage and pleaded: "Dear father, will you forgive me? I am engaged to Mr. Darling."

"My God!" groaned Mr. Morton, as if he had received a shot in the breast. "Engaged to marry that fellow!"

"Yes, father," replied the girl, trembling and terrified at the old gentleman's looks. "You do not know him so well as I do, otherwise you could not be offended at my choice."

Deeply mortified and chagrined as he was at this unexpected revelation, nevertheless the old gentleman felt that he had, under the circumstances, said enough on the subject for the time being.

Mr. Morton and his daughter, after a rough-and-tumble stage and wagon ride of nearly a hundred miles, arrived home safely, much to the joy of Mary's mother and two brothers, who received her with open arms. She had many glowing stories to tell of school days and Sacramento life,

which filled in pleasantly the leisure hours about the household. Mary could not long keep her love secret from her mother. She felt that her father would certainly reveal it; and preferring to break the news herself, the first opportunity found her kneeling before the good house-wife reciting in detail her love, engagement and the influences and circumstances which induced it. Mrs. Morton was as much surprised at the revelation as her husband had been, and very painfully impressed with the possible consequences of the important step Mary had taken unadvised. In fact, she felt in part responsible for the whole affair; recalling to mind the opposition offered by her husband to allowing the girl to leave home "on a boarding-school excursion," as he termed it, and that he consented to the arrangement only when she had strenuously insisted upon its concession. During his short visit at the homestead she had hardly been more favorably impressed with Mr. Darling's appearance, conversation and manners than her husband. It had never occurred to her that Mary might possibly fall in love with him. She imagined the girl so much attached to her home and its associations, that no influence could wean her from them. She felt aggrieved and pained to think that Mary would take such an important step without counsel, and took early occasion to express disapproval. The girl was agitated and tearful. Pleading with her mother for compassion and encouragement, she told how her father had forced the secret. How much she regretted not having consulted her parents before accepting the proffered engagement. How she loved Mr. Darling; how noble and polite he was, and that she could never love anyone else; and, moreover, he would be at the homestead in a month to claim his own.

"Does Mr. Darling propose to take you to Sacramento to live?"

"I really don't know, ma; but I presume he will, for I am sure he would never consent to live away out here in the country. Besides, he is getting a good salary in the city.

This will give us ample support, and a surplus which Mr. Darling had promised shall go towards liquidating the indebtness incurred in my education."

"But my girl," interposed her mother, "I feel as if we could hardly live without your presence. You have been the joy of the household and the consolation of my life for the last ten years, and now to think that after exhausting our resources in completing your education, you should be disposed to leave us in poverty and old age, makes me sad, indeed."

"Well, mamma," replied Mary, much distressed at the disconsolate view her mother took of the affair. "If you are so much opposed to the marriage, it shall be postponed until you and pa are better reconciled to it. If so disposed I am sure Mr. Darling would be pleased to have you and pa go and live with us in Sacramento. Dear ma," she continued "you have drudged here all your life, having neither rest or enjoyment. The farmer's toil is the hardest in the list of avocations, and his wife is simply a slave."

"You know not what you say my child," replied Mrs. Morton. "You have seen simply the surface of city life, and therefore imagine that it consists of a ceaseless round of pleasure, when the facts are, there is more of want, misery and suffering in large cities, ten to one, than in the country. You speak glibly of the drudgery and barren pleasures of my life. The past is at least secure, of which I have nothing to complain. My eyes are growing dim, it is true; but in all the long years of my wedded life, peace and plenty has ever followed me. God never made a more noble man than your father. He has been as changeless as the sun since the day he first made the vow to love and protect me. Like a river running to the ocean his untiring attentions and generous consideration of my every want has grown deeper as the stream of life has moved onward, and to encourage him in well-doing has been to my soul like the quiet glory of an eternal sunset. You and your brothers growing up about us have nerved our hearts and strengthened our hands

in the darkest hour. Your rosewater visions of life, acquired by sojourn in Sacramento, may cause you to see and consider my life as having been dull and hard. Nevertheless, I hope that yours may be equally happy and prosperous."

"I hope so, too, ma, but trust I shall be spared the drudgery which you have experienced. I don't see," continued Mary, "the necessity of an accomplished education for a farmer's wife. It cannot be utilized on the farm. The commonest clod-hopper in the land can plow and hoe as well as the best educated. So can a Biddy cook and wash as well as an educated woman. Then, what is the use of education and refinement if it is to be buried on a farm? I hope that I am prepared for something better and higher."

"My dear," replied Mrs. Morton; "you do not comprehend the difficulties which surround city life. Education, when practical, is of as much utility on the farm as in any other calling. The soul can expand under the breadth of a liberal education in the country as well as in the city. Being untrammelled by the evil influences and temptations which beset great centres of population, country people, although honest toil constitute a large portion of their inheritance, should nevertheless be better and happier than those who are compelled to live by their wits and sharp practice. In fact, the country is the Lord's vineyard, in which his creatures are called to labor. The hills and mountains are his altars and the groves his sanctuaries, on and in which men have worshipped and given thanks since the birth of the race; while the polished cities, fashioned for show and to please man's vanity, are like unto fields of 'whited sepulchres filled with rottennesss and dead men's bones.'"

CHAPTER V.

God has made many wonderful things
To beautify and adorn the earth;
But all others fashioned into one
Could not command, and charm so much
As a lovely, sweet-tempered woman.

THE intelligence of Mary Morton's return from Sacramento was soon noised about the neighborhood. Ernest Burk was among the first to hear the news, through Willie Morton, Mary's younger brother, who, on his way to town for the mail the day after Mary's arrival, had imparted the information.

"Is she well? How does she appear?" exclaimed Burk, in one breath.

"Oh, yes, she appears very well, replied the boy, "and very fine. In fact, you would hardly know her, she has changed so much since going away. She has grown very handsome, and she knows it, too. She never goes out-doors without her gloves on and a veil over her face, for she says that her complexion will be ruined if she don't. And, oh, ain't she some on manners, though! This morning, at breakfast, she gave me and Bub a round lecture on 'table etiquette,' as she calls it. I poured my tea out into the saucer, and set the cup down on the table-cloth. Then I held the spoon between my thumb and forefinger to stir it. Then I began to eat with my knife, and you would have thought from her looks and 'O my's,' and like expressions, that she was going to faint about it; and before we got through with our breakfast she was teaching her mother how to hold the tea-pot. Golly! I tell you, Ernest Burk, my big sister's some! She's got the agony about as bad as a monkey dressed in red flannel. She is no more like our Mary of two years ago than an iceberg is like a sunbeam."

"Does she propose to remain at home this fall and winter?" inquired Burk.

"I don't know," answered the boy, "but I rather guess not, for I don't think this county is big enough to hold her; and I am sure we're too tarnation poor to live in the style she talks about since she got home. Besides, that fellow who was out here from Sacramento last year—you remember him, don't you?—he parted his hair in the middle, wore kid gloves, and carried a little cane with an ivory handle. Well, Mary talks about him a good deal, and I overheard her tell mother last night that the fellow—let's see, what was his name now?—Deary, no!—Darling, that's it. Well, she told mother he was coming out here in about a month to claim her for his own. I s'pose that means to marry or something like that. But," continued the boy squinting at the sun, "it must be nearly one o'clock, and I must be going or I shall be in the night getting home."

With this he gave the old horse a cut, and the rattling spring-wagon rolled off. Burk stood rooted to the spot for nearly half an hour after the boy's departure, pondering over the revelations just heard. Being aware that the boy was rather wild and given to exaggeration, some allowance, he thought, should be made for this. Nevertheless, he could not help thinking that there were many grains of truth in the boy's story. It was so nearly in accord with his conceptions of the ultimate result of an education acquired at a fashionable boarding-school, that there should be no surprise even if what he was told proved fully true. That part of the boy's conversation which impressed Burk most deeply was the intelligence that Mr. Darling proposed coming up from Sacramento to the Morton homestead to claim Mary "for his own." Could it be possible that the girl had engaged herself to this exquisite, dandy clerk, with his hair parted in the middle? This was a very unsavory thought for the young farmer to digest. How could he ascertain the facts in the case? His first impulse was to go to Mrs. Morton and learn from her the truth or falsity of the

impression; but his courage and pride overcame this inclination. "No," said he to himself, reflectively, "I am no puppy to go whining around a girl's mother to learn who is foremost in her affections. I will learn the whole matter from Mary herself, in a way dignified and effectual. Thanks to energy, health and good crops, I have, at present, something at my service better than an old spring-wagon. My new buggy and harness hitched to shining 'Blackhawk,' shall stand at the door of the Morton homestead next Sunday morning. If Mary is engaged to that clerk, Darling, she will refuse to go to church with me, although I have the finest rig in the country; for I know that the girl is honest, and naturally of a superior mold. If engaged, she will decline the proffered ride; but, in doing so, I am satisfied the lady will be embarrassed, consequently offer me good opportunity and a reasonable excuse for inquiring the reason why, when she cannot very well avoid spitting out the whole affair. I am fully resolved, and will know the worst next Sunday. Yes," he continued after a pause, "next Sunday I will know the worst. Although satisfied that my hope is very slender indeed, yet I will never desert the fort so long as there is a color flying. The coward in war or love never won a victory. Failing, I shall have the consciousness of an earnest, honorable contest. If successful, the shadow in which I now stand will seem to me, in after years, like a mist, dispelled before the rising sun. With courage unabated I am alone on the brink of a troubled river; beyond is the promised land of all my hopes. If I falter in the intervening space, my lot is desolation, and my life obscured."

* * * * *

Ten o'clock Sunday morning found Ernest Burk, with his new buggy, before the Morton homestead. He was dressed in a shining cassimere suit. As he drove up, Mary, with her elder brother, was engaged near the front door, tying up to the verandah post a straggling honeysuckle.

"Who is that?" she inquired.

"Why," said her brother, "that's Ernest Burk. Have you forgotten him in only two years absence from home?"

"Whose horse and carriage is that he has?" she continued, without apparently noticing her companion's interrogation.

"Why, it is his own, of course. Burk is not the unsophisticated chap you formerly knew. Busying his brains in the light of blazing pine-knots and midnight-oil have added immensely to his store of book knowledge, and has worn off many embarrassing asperities. And by untiring energy and attention to business, he has made sufficient money in the last two years to pay off the entire mortgage on the farm, remodel the house, build a new barn, repair the fence, lay out and stock a fine flower garden, buy that new buggy and shiny harness, and have money left. Besides, he is the soul of honor, and stands on the top round of the short social ladder in the neighborhood."

By this time Burk had hitched his horse and was walking up the pathway. Mary, much confused, hurriedly adjusted her hair and the bow about her neck.

"Miss Morton, I believe," said Burk, advancing with outstretched hand.

"The same that you formerly knew as Mary," replied the girl, extending her gloved palm.

The greeting was cordial but embarrassed. Mary's brother excused himself and withdrew, leaving his sister and Burk undisturbed. For some moments there was an awkward silence. Feeling conscious of a possible barrier between them, Burk was on his guard lest he should betray the sentiment which burned within him.

"You appear very much improved since you left home," said he, in the way of compliment. "The tan of the sun has left your cheeks, but it is succeeded by the colors of the rose and the lily. You are taller and more graceful. Your hair is equally beautiful, and your once little brown hands," —he paused, taking hold of one of them—"have lost their rustic appearance, and white oval palms and taper, waxen fingers are substituted."

"You flatter me," said she, withdrawing her hand, "but admitting, for argument's sake, all you have said to be true, it appears to me that you have improved more at home than I at Sacramento, with all the advantages there offered."

"I do not understand where the improvement on my part comes in. My face is as brown as the faded leaves falling about us, and my hands are calloused with hard labor."

"That may be all very true," replied Mary, her color heightening as she spoke. "But there is something dignified in labor when directed by a high standard of intelligence; and you are my ideal of the combination."

"I sincerely thank you for the compliment," said Burk, with a glow of satisfaction in his face, but he continued, looking her full in the eyes, "I have been under the impression that your ideal man has undergone many changes in the last two years."

At this she blushed to the finger tips and remained silent. Burk, observing her confusion, said: "Beg pardon, Miss Morton, I certainly did not intend any offense; but feeling that unless my thirsty soul, like these withering roses, have a refreshing shower—in a word, receive a few falling drops from the fountain of your love—I feared despair will come and bring ruin to my cherished hopes. I trust you will not be offended at my speech. It would be rash and out of place to-day for me to make a declaration here. But after all the rumors which have been afloat, I hope you will pardon my presumption in wishing to know whether or not you are engaged to Mr. Darling. Do not stare and hold your breath; it must come out. For, if you have pledged your love to him immutable, in justice and in honor, I should know it, that my soul may rise above the dogging of your footsteps. If the report be true, tell me, and I shall bear my disappointment like a man. It can make no difference to you whether I nurse misery or not. I came to-day to ask you to accompany me to church. If truly engaged to be married to another, I am sure you do not wish to go. Neither would I have you—for the man or woman who tampers with a pure

affection and an honest love, would rob a sanctuary of its sacred relics. If there is yet hope, and nothing serious with your heart, I ask only that you may not despise me in the endeavor to regain your love."

He folded her hands in his, and gazed in her blanched face. Her reply came slowly, and, with an effort which seemed to wring her heart, as she said:

"To you, Ernest Burk, I owe an apology. Two years ago I gave you hope, in which, at the time, I was sincere. One year from home sufficed to wean me from that attachment. My fault is, that I did not tell you so. While I had, and still have, the highest regard for you as a friend, and something more, I felt and still feel that I could never be content and happy, drudging out my existence on a farm. Had I never known what refined society is, and the joy of its pastimes and associations, possibly I might have been content to love and labor as my mother before me has done; but two years of study and society have made me less sentimental and more utilitarian. While I would never consent to marry a man I did not love, nevertheless it is well to look beyond the horizon of the honeymoon. Incessant physical labor is repulsive to a refined intellect. With education comes a desire more for mental than physical food; and hence we seek such associations as are likely to lead us upward in the social and intellectual scale, and away from the common drudgeries of life. Mr. Burk, in honor, I must tell you that my reported engagement with Mr. Darling of Sacramento is true. Yet, I hope to retain your friendship, for there is no one for whom I have a higher esteem."

Burk appeared rooted to the spot; his eyes were fixed on space, and large drops of perspiration stood on his forehead.

After a painful pause, he replied. "It is enough. My worst fears are upon me. My cup of bitterness is full. I go from you, Mary Morton, with no anger in my heart. May your brightest visions of life and happiness be fully realized. If distress should overtake you, all that I have and am shall be at your service." Seizing her hand, he continued, "May

heaven bless you in your choice! Farewell, but not forever. Something tells me we shall meet again."

Before giving her a chance to speak a word, he was gone. She watched anxiously his rapid flight. His horse was unhitched in a moment, and springing into the buggy he was soon out of sight.

* * * * *

"My dear Miss Morton, I am happy to see you looking so well this hot, dusty day," exclaimed Mr. Darling, advancing to where the girl stood awaiting him in the doorway of the Morton homestead. "How have you been since I saw you last, out here in this parched-up country. In homage to my heart's highest impulse, permit me to kiss this lily-white hand of yours."

"I have been very well, indeed," she replied, "and am pleased to see you so bright and happy."

"Have you not been extremely lonely out here since your return from Sacramento? I am sure I should have died long ere this of *ennui* and dust, to say nothing of the heat. How soon can I hope to have you return with me to Sacramento, where I but yesterday left green groves, pleasant walks and playing fountains, fit haunts for the gods?"

"I cannot tell," replied Mary, with a hollow sadness in her voice that startled Mr. Darling out of his poetic mood.

"What is the matter? Why can you not tell? All the way out from the city, everything is arranged for your reception into society. Board and lodgings are already provided for at one of the most fashionable houses in town; and still you cannot tell when we shall go from this dusty, desolate country to a place of joy and happiness? What has transpired to make you so low-spirited on a subject so near my heart?"

"Nothing," said Mary, "only my parents are very much opposed to my leaving them and going to the city to live. Ma says she thinks it will kill her, and pa says my anticipated joy as a society lady, will, before many years, be turned to dust and bitterness."

"Be satisfied, my dear," said Darling, putting his arm around her waist, "the difficulty is not so great as you anticipated; so long as I have your love and companionship all things are easy, for if the worst comes to the worst we will take a ride by moonlight. Nothing short of your downright opposition shall thwart my purpose."

As previously stated, Mary had informed her parents of Mr. Darling's intended visit, and what would come of it. So the old people were not altogether unprepared for the trying ordeal. At the first opportunity Mr. Darling stated his business to Mr. and Mrs. Morton, winding up his story by declaring that he could not possibly live without the girl. That he should be pleased to have her parents go with them to Sacramento, where he would engage to support the whole family. In the event of their declining to go, he promised to contribute towards liquidating the indebtedness on the homestead, to the extent, at least, of the money expended on Mary's education.

"What is your monthly salary?" inquired Mr. Morton.

"One hundred dollars per month," replied Darling, "and I have a promise of an increase, or be taken in as a full partner in the establishment of which I am at present *practically* the manager."

"How long have you been receiving your present salary?"

"For some four or five years," replied Darling, with some hesitation.

"How much have you saved in that time?" continued Mr. Morton.

"Well," said Darling, "that is a direct question, that concerns only myself."

"I think it is a question that concerns my daughter as well," continued Mr. Morton; "for if alone you have saved nothing of your salary, how can you hope to save anything, with a wife to support?"

"Having no one but myself to provide for, I admit that most of my money has been spent foolishly; but when I am settled with a wife, and an aim and end in view, I propose turning over a new leaf, and leading a different life."

"My observation has been that the average young man, with a good salary, who can save none of it, when married, lives with his nose continually to the grind-stone—a kind of hand-to-mouth existence—which is anything but enviable, even when moving in fashionable society. The proposition that my wife and I shall go with you to Sacramento with the expectation of being supported from your wages is not to be thought of; neither can we hope for any assistance in paying off the old mortgage from this source. As to our consent that you may take the girl to the city, we are very reluctant to give it, for the reason that she is too young and inexperienced to fully comprehend what she is doing. If we could keep her with us a few years longer, I am sure she would take a different view of the matter; but as she appears very much depressed at the thought of breaking the engagement, or suspend its consummation any great length of time, and being willing on my part to make every sacrifice in order to secure her happiness, I will give my consent to the marriage. But I want you to understand that I do this unwillingly."

After considerable discussion, and some crying on the part of Mary and her mother, Mr. and Mrs. Morton, thinking that it was possibly the best thing under the circumstances which could be done, concluded to let the couple get married.

The ceremony was very quietly performed by a minister brought from Colusa, and in the presence of the family and a few neighbors. The happy pair departed next day for Sacramento, with many blessings and much solicitude.

CHAPTER VI.

Of all unalloyed joys of life
That hour is nearest Heaven
When two loving, happy hearts
Are moulded into one.

UPON their arrival at Sacramento Mr. Darling and his young wife occupied handsome rooms at one of the fashionable up-town boarding houses. They associated much with society people, and were frequent participants in the ball-room and *elite* social parties. Often were they observed at the theatre. Thus the fall and winter months passed pleasantly with them. Although not disposed to flirt, Mrs. Darling's beauty, wit and vivacity made her a general favorite, especially among her gentlemen acquaintances. Esteeming compliments, woman-like, she exhausted her ingenuity and resources upon her toilet. In this direction she was led by Mr. Darling, who, being an exquisite in dress and extremely vain, delighted in nothing so much as to see his wife outshine other women. She purchased largely of finery at the fancy-goods store in which her husband was a clerk, if not with his approval at least without his objection. The extreme attention paid her by several gentlemen acquaintances made Mr. Darling a little sour and jealous at times, but no serious breach occurred. Thus the first year of married life was spent in a continual round of pleasure-seeking. The only thing that troubled the young wife was an evidently growing disposition of Mr. Darling to partake of the wine-cup too freely, which, at times, would get the better of him. During the second year of wedded life a change came over the fortunes of the young couple. They had lived in excess of Mr. Darling's salary and were several hundred dollars in debt at the store for

dress and fancy goods. His employer finally told him that his credit was at an end and that one-half of his monthly salary would be applied to liquidating the indebtedness. It was found impossible for Mr. Darling and lady to retain their high-board rate on fifty dollars a month, so they very reluctantly moved to less expensive and pretentious quarters.

About this time there came along a little stranger, which entirely broke up their pleasure-party proclivities. Mr. Darling, being a man of the world, could not content himself, during the long winter evenings, with a sick wife and crying baby, so he sought his club associates and whist table, where his soothing Havana and the wine-cup made him forget his little troubles and disappointments.

Before the third year had fairly set in Mr. Darling had lost his situation on account of intemperance and consequent inattention to his duties. Finally, his resources ran so low that a single indifferent room, furnished with a bed, a bureau, three chairs, a table and a coal-oil stove, was the best he could afford.

On account of his unsteady habits, Mr. Darling found it difficult to get another situation, and consequently did odd jobs, casting up accounts and posting books for different mercantile houses of the town. The wife and mother by this time fully realized her perilous situation. She could not help observing the downward course of her husband, and, in this trying hour, the noble traits of her character developed, like roses in the midst of desolation. She did all that a woman's love and energy could do to reform her husband and retrieve their ruined fortunes. When too late, she realized her mistake in trying to ape the conventionalities of people of wealth and leisure and tipping the wine-glass with her husband at convivial calls. She was grieved to know there was no hope of relief from parents or former friends. Her mother was dead; her father financially ruined, and her brothers gone she knew not where. The remembrance of how she had left home against the wish and earnest protest of her relatives weighed like lead upon her heart; that in

so doing she had possibly been the cause of her mother's death and the ruin of the household. She felt a yearning for the old country home and its loved inmates; but it was now too late to remedy the fatal mistake which she had made. These thoughts and sad musings tended to make her cling more closely to her husband. Privation and poverty she was willing to endure, if Mr. Darling could only be weaned from his dissipated habits. To this end she bent all her energies; but he was naturally so weak in the elements which sustain and fortify in the hour of trial, that her efforts were unavailing. She felt that could he regain his lost position, or some one which would afford them a respectable living, his self-pride and love of family might aid her in bringing about a reformation. So she went time and again and pleaded with his old employer to take him back into his service and confidence. In sheer pity for the wife, the old merchant gave Mr. Darling an occasional job making out bills or casting up accounts; but no steady work could he get, for his dissipated sprees were becoming more frequent. Pressed for food sufficient on which to live, and being a good seamstress, Mary did much sewing for her neighbors. This resource enabled her to aid materially in making up the family support. Thus continued the struggle of this noble-hearted woman for bread and reform, until five years of married life had passed.

* * * * *

"A fearful night is this to be out in a strange city," exclaimed Ernest Burk, as he left the house of a friend living in the eastern part of Sacramento City, where he had been spending the evening. "Confound the luck!" continued he to himself as he braced his umbrella against the driving rain and sleet, which fell thick and fast. "I had better have accepted the hospitality of my father's old school-mate rather than brave a night like this in seeking my hotel. I believe this is I street; the Golden Eagle is two blocks south and five blocks further west." Burk had not proceeded far when his attention was attracted by a

pleading voice near him. He stopped to listen. "Yes," he soliloquized, "that is a woman's voice." Then stepping along cautiously through the blinding storm, he discovered immediately before him, on the sidewalk, a prostrate man with a woman kneeling by his side.

"Come Edward, come home. You will perish here exposed to the cold and damp of this dreadful night."

"Ho,—hic!—woman, go get me some more rum—or—hic—I'll murder you."

"No, no, Edward! Come home, and then I will get you some."

"What is the trouble here?" inquired Burk, as he bent over the two trying to discover the cause.

"Oh, sir," said the voice, which sounded strangely sad and musical, "will you please help me home with my husband? He will certainly perish here, and I cannot possibly get him to the house unless assisted."

Without a word Burk aided in raising the stupefied man to an upright position, and running his strong, right arm under the left of the staggering form, the woman took the same position on the other side of her drunken husband. Thus he was led staggering until they reached an old frame building, when they marched in at the front door, and up a rickety stairway, to a room dimly lighted. The stupid man was placed on an old lounge which had been re-covered with brown linen cloth. The woman then turned up the light, and Burk took a survey of the room. It was about twelve by fourteen feet in size, with low ceilings, a bed in one corner, on which two children lay sleeping, a pine table, a little cupboard, a coal-oil stove, a trunk and a pine bureau. In all its poverty the room was scrupulously neat. While Burk's eyes were wandering around the room they met those of the woman, which at the time were riveted upon him.

"Ernest Burk! Merciful Heaven!" she exclaimed. "I cannot be mistaken. You are the same that I knew in my childhood. How is my father? Where are my brothers? Oh, my dear mother!" she continued, wringing her hands;

"could I but behold her face once more, and hear her words of comfort and consolation, I could bear up under this trial!"

During this speech Burk stood stupified. Could this frail, pale-faced, tattered woman be the joyful Mary Morton he had known and worshiped only five years since? He was confounded and dumb at the scene before him. A thousand memories rushed across his brain. Finally, he exclaimed. "Can it be possible that this is you, Mary?"

"Yes," she replied sorrowfully, "the same petted, spoiled girl, who, by her willful perversity and blind following, has brought anguish upon my father's household and sorrow upon myself."

"I cannot understand or comprehend why it is that you are here in this miserable hovel, without comfort or even the necessaries of life."

"I have no one to blame but myself," said she sorrowfully. "Having but little knowledge of the world, and none of the mysteries of finance upon arriving at Sacramento, after marriage, I flattered myself that life to me would be a noonday dream, with the murky horizon of a stinted existence so far off, that I never imagined we should feel the chill of its shadow. But alas, before I was fairly warmed in the embrace of my pink and lily life, I began to feel the thorns that protrude from every rose-bud. From thoughtless encouragement my husband learned to love his wine cup. When too late I realized the error of my way and did all that was possible for his reform. In spite of the love, work and counsel which I could give, Mr. Darling continued in his downward course, until—here we are, penniless and forgotten by our butterfly friends."

"Are you destitute of household supplies?" enquired Burk.

"No," answered the woman, hesitatingly and evasively, "we have sufficient to keep body and soul together, by my earnest endeavor and the proceeds of the odd jobs my husband gets."

"If you will accept the aid of an old friend," enquired Burk, "I shall be pleased to assist you."

"No," said Mrs. Darling, after a painful pause, "we are not yet reduced to straits that compel us to accept the hand of charity. Yet, I am grateful for your generous offer. But, Mr. Burk, you have not answered my questions about my father and brothers. I have not heard from them within the last year."

"Your father and younger brother are at present stopping with me; your older brother, a few weeks since, was in Virginia City, Nevada, whither he went to repair his shattered fortunes."

A few commonplace remarks passed, and, as Burk moved toward the door, Mrs. Darling exclaimed:

"Give my love to father and brother. Tell father I hope he has forgiven me, for although vain in my conceit I knew not what I did. Tell him to send me his blessing, and I can bear up under this affliction. Tell him I have a thousand times repented of my folly. Oh, that I could behold the old homestead once more and feel the affectionate kiss of my mother on my cheek! I would then be happy in my desolation."

Burk, observing her tears and agitation, took hold of the poor woman's hand and kindly said: "Good-bye; hope and perservere, but don't fret!" and he was gone before she had time to reply.

When he had disappeared she stood with her hands pressed to her temples, repeating, 'Hope and persevere, but don't fret!' How lightly and thoughtlessly were those words spoken six years ago! But he has never forgotten them. When they were uttered I never thought they would come back to me with the force and bitterness of despair. Hope! the word is a mockery. Persevere! Have I not persevered? Faith and love and duty have braced my heart to toil incessantly with brain and hand, without even a shadow of hope on which to feed my thirsty soul. Don't fret! O God! out of what composition canst Thou form a creature proof

against the cares of mortal life! He who has braved the oceans of the world, and passed the door of death in the lap of scourging pestilence, may have reached the realms of pale oblivion without a murmur; but when the heart-strings, one by one, are sundered, and life's load grows heavier as we pass each station on the road to eternity; when love, labor and eternal watching pass for nothing, where, O Lord, is our consolation in well doing?"

CHAPTER VII.

How sad it is to see a noble soul
Crushed and bleeding, in the prime of life!
'Tis like myrtle flowers untimely falling,
Shedding perfume beneath the feet that bruise them.

ONE year after Burk's adventure with the Darling family, a letter was received by Mary's father stating that Mr. Darling had died in a fit of *delirium tremens* a few days previous. There was no word or intimation of her whereabouts or future prospects. Evidently she felt that Mr. Morton was not in a condition to elp her financially, and concluded it would not be judicious) make unhappy his declining years by her vexatious oubles, privations and gloomy prospects for the future.

Left homeless at the death of her husband, Mrs. Darling as thrown entirely on her own resources. With her needle, y the strictest economy and untiring industry, she was nabled to provide the necessaries of life for herself and two nildren.

When Ernest Burk heard of the death of Darling, ere came up in his heart a hope like a flame kindled from e embers of a smouldering fire. Several times during the llowing year he was on the point of journeying to Sacraento to see what had become of his lost idol. Go where would, her image was ever before him as she appeared that dreadful night in the dim light of that squalid nement. The only thing that checked his determination seek her out at once was a conscious knowledge that, being woman of spirit, she would never accept charitable conderation from a man whose devotion she had spurned. ut, like the mariner who beholds a glittering pearl beneath troubled sea, his craft circles about it. Each dashing dan-

ger of the deep but magnifies the precious jewel, until, circumspection lost, he dares, and dives to death or fortune. Thus Burk had spent a year in irresolution and doubt, circling about a single thought, until contending forces moved and swayed the feelings of his heart like the ebbing and flowing tides.

"I'll go," he said. "I can but fail, and failure is joy compared to this suspense."

He soon beheld the Capitol dome of the "Garden City." For weeks he wandered from street to street in search of the image on his heart. The house where he had seen her last was finally found. The tenement was vacant and on the door the words "To Let" were posted. Burk sought the agent of the house, from whom he learned that the woman left soon after her husband's death, because she could not pay the rent demanded. Whither she went the agent could not tell, but thought, if in town, the most likely place to find her was on or about the city's suburbs, where rents were cheap.

Another week was passed in fruitless search. Burk would not advertise or hawk the name about the streets, for he felt no right or claim to do so, but rather like a trespasser in search of forbidden ground. Every passing woman's face with slackened pace he viewed, and then increased his speed again.

> Of all the creatures in the world,
> A man in love is least in reason.

"I'll trace the levee down along the river's shore," sa he, "perhaps to meet a gardener, huxter, or some one el coming into town, who can tell me something of her whe abouts. A dozen times have I traveled every sidewalk the town, except this southern border; every house at wh I've had a hope of finding her has been visited under s sham or false pretext. Every lane and alley has b guarded for her coming. When fatigued and worn by derings, I've sought the trunk of some friendly tree gazed around its barked sides into back yards and big doors, without a reason or a hope. Confound the luck!

been a fool. Surely I am going daft to be wandering around here in search of one who has now grown mythical to my mind. The police will soon be on my track, and I shall be apprehended, either for a knave or lunatic. Therefore I will abandon this vain endeavor and go home to mother's heart where I shall find comfort and repose. But on my way back to the city's center, I will make a line as near as may be from this point to the Capitol's uncompleted dome. In the low and tangled brush-land to be traversed I may make some new discovery."

Thus saying, he moved off with his purpose, and every cabin passed he paced around it once, peeping about and in at the doors and windows. Finally, he reached a secluded spot. The street lines were hardly marked. There, beneath a spreading willow, stood a little cottage, built of boards set upright and battened; it was vine-clad to cover up its poverty, with a blooming oleander and flower-bed before the half-opened door. A four-year old was playing in the yard. As Burk came up she looked him in the face. "Those eyes," he said, "I have somewhere seen their image. My little lady, can you tell me who lives here?"

"My mudder, brudder Will and me; we all lives here."

"What is your mother's name?" inquired Burk, with an anxious heart.

"My mudder's name is mudder, an' my brudder's name is Will. I loves dem, too, and dat is all I knows."

At this moment there issued from the house the sound of a sweet melodious voice, singing:

"I have wandered away from my home,
From the cottage that sits on the plain;
Where, with brothers and playmates to roam,
Was joy that I shall have not again.

"The buttercup, daisy and maybells
That shyly grew down in the dell,
Hiding 'mid sweetbriars and hazels,
O, do I remember them well.

"When the work of the morning was over,
The milk strained and dishes away,
The sweeping of kitchen and parlor,
Then I skipped off to school for the day.

"But, alas! I did wilfully sever
Those sweet hours, too precious to last,
And my joys and pleasures forever,
Are hid in the tomb of the past."

He could not be mistaken. Burk felt certain that these were notes from his lost Mary.

"By heavens!" he exclaimed. "I will know for a certainty, anyway."

With this he passed through the little latticed gate and advanced to the door, and, tapping it lightly, in a moment a lovely woman appeared.

"Ernest Burk!" she exclaimed, growing pale and red by turns.

"Mary Morton," returned Burk, extending his hand—"I beg pardon; Mrs. Darling, I should have said."

"Never mind about names Ernest; I am glad to see you, I am sure; come in. How is it that you are here?" she continued, her expression brightening and her embarrassment increasing.

"I am here in search of you."

"How did you learn where I lived?"

"I never learned it. The agent of the old house in the northern part of the city, where you formerly resided, was under the impression that you had moved to the outskirts of the city, and I came here as a last resort. For weeks I have done nothing but seek for you; and now, just at the last moment, when about giving up all hopes of ever beholding your face again, our meeting in this place appears to partake of the miraculous."

"I cannot conceive why you should worry and spend weeks in the search of one so unworthy as I."

"Because we have not heard from you in many months, and your father is very unhappy on that account."

"Did he send you on this search?"

"No; but he was willing and I was anxious to learn something of your whereabouts."

"You owe me nothing, Ernest, but contempt and hatred."

"Let the past be forgiven; every wrong generates its own penalty, while disinterested friendship and pure affection measure their consolation in the cup of honest purpose. For seven long years, like a frozen stream, my love has stood still, and only melts and flows while in the sunshine of your presence."

"It cannot be that you still love a wanderer, poor and wretched, bereft of friends, washing clothes and stitching garments for a living?"

"Wealth is born of hardened hearts; the purest lives are always poor. It appears as if it was ordained that the rich shall flaunt their purple robes in the face of better people, living for show and unsated appetites,

Dying adorned and damned,

while the honest toiler in the field of life, bent on duty, ever seeking for the right, slumbers at night so near the golden gates of peace, that angel hands are felt upon the brow. This world to such is like a journey, rough and rugged. Foot-sore and weary upon reaching the silent river, the stream is soothing as they pass with all their treasures to the promised land. I never loved you for your milliner's make-up, but for yourself alone. So, after all these years of waiting and of love, will you refuse me now? Come with me, Mary, to my sunny home, and leave this squalid misery."

"My brain is so confused! It cannot be that this is so! I surely dream! Let me rest and gain composure. Give me a night's reflection and I will answer you to-morrow."

* * * * *

That night was full of dreams for Burk, in which great castles, thin as air, were built, while Mrs. Darling slept the sleep of peace, the first that had come to her for several years. The day dawned one of autumn's rarest. The leaves, turned golden by the hand of Time, fell along Burk's pathway southward, like so many omens of good cheer to come. The cottage gained, he tapped the door lightly. Within an ear was straining for the hoped-for sound. When it was

heard, she came, all beauty, to the door. A single night had erased the caremarks from her face. Her eyes had lost their langour, and their soul beamed out as on that day when Burk had told his love by the brook under the old oak-tree. The girlish face was gone, and in its place one so full of womanly grace and fair, that all her former charms appeared to Burk as if surpassed. When within the sitting-room, the children out at play, the lover, with the old flame re-kindled in his heart, declared he never saw her look so well.

"Now," said he, taking her hands in his, "before I sit or rest or breathe again, I wish to know the worst you have in store for me. I need not tell you of the past, you know that like a book. Like sunshine and showers mingled, let it go. The present is all we have, and that is gone before the words are spoken. I need not repeat my love to you; my lips revealed it yesterday as told nine years ago. And in all the dismal period intervening, 'the golden bowl has not been broken, the silver chord not a moment loosened.' I love you now, I loved you then, and cannot love another. All this I offer now, a home and an honored name. What say you, Mary? May I hope?"

"Yes!" she replied, with streaming eyes; "hope and persevere, that anchor always holds. Then hold me to your heart, and claim me for your own. I will endeavor to make amends to you and the remainder of my father's household for the sorrow and injury a false conception of life imposed."

* * * * *

In the afternoon of the second day after Burk's declaration and acceptance, there was a little gathering of neighbors and friends at Mrs. Darling's cottage. Her children—Edward, a bright boy of six summers, and Annie, more generally known in the neighborhood as "little Butter-cup"—were dressed neatly, and wonderingly waited the coming of an event incomprehensible to them. Mrs. Darling appeared like a new creature; her few acquaintances could hardly realize the change that had been wrought in so short a time.

Her real name was less used by those who had made her acquaintance, through the scant batches of sewing she was accustomed to do for them, than that of the "little widow in black." But now—

> As when the storms of winter past,
> The golden sun, with glory beaming,
> Warms each tiny seed, the cold brown earth
> Puts on its spring and summer robes,

Mrs. Darling had put away her sorrow and her widow's weeds, and was in reality "a thing of beauty and a joy forever."

Ernest Burk soon arrived with a minister, and when he saw this lovely trio waiting anxiously for his hand to lead them to his home—

> The sorrow in his heart departed
> Like the shadows in secluded vales,
> As the morning light advances;

And there burned in the depths of his dark eyes a flame like that of a signal fire built upon a hill at night. When the minister inquired "Will you take this woman for your wedded wife?" he answered, broad and deep, "I will, with all my heart." When the words were put to her, she said: "I will!" and wept for joy. Kindly greetings all around, then a dainty lunch was served, and the parting words were spoken. A coach at hand received the happy family and two well-packed trunks on top. The neighbors agreed to pack up all the effects left in the cottage and ship them to "Mrs. Ernest Burk, Colusa, Cal." Instead of a stage Mr. Burk and wife preferred the steamboat and took passage up-river that evening. The moon was full that night, and so were four joint hearts. A new world had dawned upon the children. In their gambols about the steamer's deck they played by turns and sought repose in Burk's strong arms, while the mother leaned for support against his shoulder.

"Dear Ernest!" said she, "I never beheld such a fairy land as this. See those trees reflected in the stream, while their golden-tinged leaves are falling one by one on the bosom of the river, to float with the current to the all-engulfing ocean."

"Yes," replied Burk, thoughtfully, while stroking the shining curls of the little girl in his lap, "those tiny leaves are emblematic of human life. We are on the 'River of Time,' floating with its current. Every moment brings us nearer the ocean of eternity. Although in the prime of life and happy in each other's love, it is an impressive thought to be always conscious that we are continually passing landmarks on the shores of time, which we shall never pass again. You were singing but a moment ago, and the sweet sounds echoed back from the shore. So, with every noble act or sweet word spoken, their echo and influence for good are as imperishable as God's own love. When we run in imagination back through the dim vista of the past, the proud monuments of man's vanity and ambition are found tottering and crumbling in the dust, while deeds of kindness, or a noble thought, expands with the lapse of time, mellowing down its rugged shores with the halo of heavenly light, to encourage, bless and cheer all who have hearts to receive the influence. So, while the world to us appears beautiful, with high hopes of happiness for the future, let us not forget that we have passed through the valley of shadows with no guide but God, and learn humiliation from experience, carrying with us always the mantle of charity and the 'balm in Gilead.'"

After a delightful afternoon and night ride the boat reached Colusa, where, after some delay, Master Morton, with Burk's double carriage and span of bays, arrived. A cordial greeting over between brother and sister, the conveyance was entered, Burk and his wife taking the back seat while the front seat was occupied by the two children and the newfound uncle as driver. When nearing the home of her earlier years Mrs. Burk appeared in spirit to be a girl again.

"O, Ernest," she exclaimed, "I feel like embracing every one of these noble spreading oaks, they appear so much like old acquaintances. Before going to Sacramento on that school excursion, in my ignorance of the great world beyond, I was much attached to the country. And now, with the wisdom

of riper years and the experience which I have had of want, sorrow and fashionable life, I shall become more attached to it than ever, and supremely happy with those I love about me."

"You must be joking," replied Burk, with a smile; "the country is drier and the roads are cut up worse than they were seven years ago, when you complained so much of the dust, and the bleakness of the land."

"There, now," said she, putting her hand over his mouth in playful mood; "the word is 'mum' about the past. Do not tease me for the folly of those rosy days, which hatched the brood of all my woes. But, then, perhaps all things are for the best. Had I accepted you at the time I married Darling your home would have been unhappy. After what I had seen and learned at school, I never could have been content to live upon a farm. Warped out of shape by a false conception of life and its duties through a *fashionable* education, I had to taste the bitter-sweet of the life passed through before its highest aims could be understood or enjoyed."

Upon his discovery of and reconciliation with Mary, Ernest immediately communicated the intelligence to his mother, indicating when he would return with his bride. Upon arrival at the farm all things were therefore in waiting for them. The feast was ready and all the neighbors present to give them a heartfelt welcome. It was a happy day at the Burk homestead. Everybody seemed to cry and laugh alternately. Mr. Morton was delighted at his daughter's return, after having been considered by him as forever lost. Mother Burk, a beautiful character and a devout Christian, thought she saw the hand of Providence in the consummation of all her hopes.

With his new wife, Ernest started on a new lease of life, all things past and present believed to have been for the best. With the advantage gained in the acquisition of a competency, and being moreover a first-class manager, Burk's accumulations gradually increased. He soon pur-

chased from the bank the old Morton homestead, and the old gentleman and Mrs. Burk, although on the shady side of sixty, having formed a sincere attachment for each other, were married, with many wishes for happiness and long life. The newly-wedded pair were fitted up for house-keeping on the old ranch, where they were generously furnished by Ernest with everything needful for their comfort. The elder of the Morton boys was killed by the caving of a drift while mining in Nevada, and the younger one is now living in Los Angeles county, cultivating the orange and the purple vine. Burk's sister married a substantial stock-grower of Tehama county, where she is now living, surrounded with an interesting family. Edward Darling only a few years ago completed an agricultural course in an Eastern college, and proposes to follow the profession of his step-father, who has given the young man every advantage that a liberal education can offer. Annie Darling ("Butter-cup") is yet with her mother, beautiful and accomplished in kitchen and parlor, having recently graduated at the Vassar College, New York. The issue of the marriage with Mr. Burk is three children, Ernest, Albert and Mary, born in the order of their naming; all healthy, happy in disposition and intelligent. Miss Minton, the exquisite young lady who was instrumental in Mary Morton's going to the Sacramento boarding-school, has had anything but a happy life. After a great deal of parade and much coquetry to capture a man "after her own heart," she finally, in desperation, married a light-fingered, smooth-faced, oily-tongued confidence-man, much addicted to gambling. He took to himself this wife simply for a make-shift, to get a few hundred dollars which she was in possession of. After three years of infelicity he left her, with two children, a broken spirit and abject poverty. Being weak and fickle-minded, and unsustained by conscientious purpose, she soon lost her reason and found a home in the Insane Asylum at Stockton, where she died some years since, leaving her children to be cared for at the Orphan's Home.

CONCLUSION.

"TRUTH is stranger than fiction" is a common saying, and with reason, for daily reports of actual experiences occurring in the great world of humanity could hardly be overdrawn by the skilled novelist; so there can be no wonder or incredulity at the simple story herein related. Many of the renowned heroes over whom history gloats were cowardly cut-throats compared with the noble, self-sacrificing men and women who are to be found along the channel of life's purest currents, like priceless gems. Astronomy has no record of the myriads of beautiful worlds which move forever around their eternal centers. A few of the most prominent only are mentioned with heralding the approach of a blazing comet, or the discovery of some far-off constellation. So it is with the record of noble deeds. The vanity of the race leads ambitious men to seek renown by deeds of prowess on the battlefield or in the less perilous victories of the stump and stage. Yet these are but the torrents which pour into and are lost in the majestic river of noble acts and deeds that move and control the turbulent currents of humanity. In earnest resolves for better things let everyone remember that though the world notes not individual sacrifice, no sacrifice for good was ever made in vain. Like seed sown in good soil it will ultimately grow to bless the sower and reaper. We find in the example of Ernest Burk encouragement in well-doing. Faithful in all things, earnest in purpose, and devoted to principle, we will leave him to the enjoyment and peace of mind which conscious duty, sooner or later, brings to its votaries.

Shall We Live Again?

O Horatio,
I have been troubled with a thought
So weird and full of mental doubt,
That in its grasp my soul is shrivelled up,
And all my frosting locks are set on end.

Like a lone sailor
Sounding the depths of an unknown sea,
With lead and line too light and short
To reach the solid bottom,
I have in vain endeavored
To probe the depths of eternity.
Hope has hung her shining mantle
On the crumbling brink of death,
And beckons me to seek the truth,
Wrapped in doubt and mystery beyond.
At times I seem a wonder to myself,
And with anxious heart I feel around
For evidence of what I am,
Like one groping in the dark.

The Christian's hope is based upon belief,
Confirmed to him by change of heart;
While Swedenborg's disciples tell
That, through the visions of the mind,

They have beheld the conscious forms
Of loved ones counted lost,
And with them held communion,
Word for word and face to face.

But, then, defective mortal sight,
Looking through imagination's lens,
Is so uncertain and so oft deceived,
That, like a rainbow's shining ends,
When reached, mist alone remains.
From gloomy chambers of the skeptic's mind,
Like slimy serpents of a hideous mould,
Crawls out the dark, cold thought
That "death is an eternal sleep,"
While the scoffer and the babbling fool,
In their conceit declare there is no God!
Can it be, good Horatio,
That these men divine the truth?
That the soul is but a blank opinion,
And that annihilation stands
Athwart the gaping door of death?

If this be so,
Then, farewell, love and ruined hopes!
Farewell, reward for well-doing;
And let the longing, thirsting heart
Feed upon its cup of bitterness.
If death is an eternal sleep,
Life, in its vexatious pathway
Is like the toilsome, foot-sore journey
Of a weary, hopeless traveler,
Climbing the heights of a frozen mountain,
To look beyond on desolation!

No, my friend, it cannot be!
The brute eats to sating, and is content;
The birds have no thought but song,
And for their chirping nestlings;
While man, with luxury surrounded,
With every temporal want supplied,
Sighs and pines for something
Beyond the reach of mortal life.
The contemplative sage in solicitude,
And the burly, tatooed bushman
Running naked through the world,
Draw their highest inspiration
From the same fond, joyous source—
The innate hope of a hereafter.

How can it be thus, Horatio,
If there was not a purpose, a design,
In the make-up of creation?
If God has so ordained it, that the
Hopes and longings for a higher life
Are part and parcel of our being,
And has not made its counterpart—
A rest, a respite, beyond ourselves—
Then the crowning glory of His work
Is but a life-consuming fire,
Wherein the divinity within us
Is turned to dust and ashes.

BF.